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President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 38

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/354)

Draft resolution (A/67/L.16)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.16.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): It is an honour for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16).

The past year has seen a number of important milestone events for Afghanistan that have redefined and reinvigorated the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and its regional and international partners. In that context, the draft resolution sends, yet again, a positive signal of sustained support to Afghanistan, its Government and its people. We are happy to see that that message is reinforced by the outstandingly high number of delegations that have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Germany, as facilitator, would like to take this opportunity to briefly highlight four key messages of the draft resolution that reflect those developments.

First, the draft resolution is about transition in the field of security. We note with satisfaction that transition is progressing continuously. The implementation of the first three tranches of transition is currently unfolding. Mindful of the many challenges in the process, we are looking forward to its phased completion in the rest of the country. The mid-2013 milestone, when Afghans will be living in areas where the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have taken lead security responsibility, is a particularly encouraging step in that regard.

The focus of the draft resolution is on improving the operational capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces. At the Bonn Conference, the international community committed itself to supporting the Afghan Government throughout transition and beyond to that end. Increasing emphasis will be put on training, equipping and advising the Afghan National Security Forces as they gradually take over full security responsibility throughout the country. With a view to the end of transition at the end of 2014 and as part of the wider objective of further empowering and enabling Afghan institutions in line with the Kabul process, that is where our priority rightly belongs.

At the NATO Summit held in Chicago earlier this year, the priority to continue to develop the Afghan National Security Forces so that it is capable of providing security to all Afghans was reaffirmed. NATO allies and International Security Assistance Force partner countries committed themselves to work towards establishing a training, advising and assistance mission. They also reaffirmed their commitment to play their part in the financial sustainability of the ANSF in the long term, with a view to the assumption of increasing financial responsibility by the Government of Afghanistan.

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A stable security environment guaranteed by the Afghan National Security Forces is key to the further development of Afghanistan. In that context, long-term strategic partnership agreements concluded between the Government of Afghanistan and its partners will contribute to creating an environment conducive to establishing lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Secondly, the draft resolution is about a long-term commitment by the international community throughout the transformation decade declared by the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners at the Bonn Conference. During the past decade, Afghanistan has made notable progress in many fields of governance and development, including health, education and infrastructure.

Yet challenges remain in many fields. Afghanistan and the international community therefore renewed and reinvigorated their long-term partnership at the Tokyo Conference in July. Building on a unique framework of mutual accountability, the international community has generously pledged to provide $16 billion through 2015 to support the economic and political stabilization of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the international community will sustain its support at or near levels of the past decade through 2017.

In return, the Government of Afghanistan has committed itself to achieving its development and governance goals, such as conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections, fostering respect for the rule of law and protecting and promoting human rights, in accordance with the stipulations of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Afghan ownership is again the foundation for the transformation decade, as clearly reflected in the principles of aid effectiveness contained in the Accountability Framework. Today, the General Assembly will send that renewed message of solidarity to our Afghan partners.

Thirdly, the draft resolution is about regional cooperation. Under the able leadership of Afghanistan and with the strong support of regional and international partners, the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan has shown continued momentum since the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference held in Kabul in June. A set of six confidence-building measures will contribute to fostering regional cooperation to enhance political, security and economic stability throughout the region.

The Istanbul Process is intended to bring greater coherence to the diversity of valuable regional initiatives. Furthermore, the Process reflects the interconnectedness of many challenges in Afghanistan. Within that framework, the fight against terrorism and against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs is complemented by confidence-building measures in the areas of education, infrastructure and economic development that are aimed at reducing poverty and creating alternative sources of income for the Afghan population.

Fourthly, the draft resolution is about support to the peace and reconciliation process. The appointment of Salahuddin Rabbani as the Chairman of the High Peace Council has revitalized the peace and reconciliation process after the heinous assassination of his father and predecessor in office.

For this Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process to yield sustainable results, it needs to be inclusive and must respect the Afghan Constitution and its human rights provisions, the rights of women in particular, as well as the set of principles outlined most recently in the Bonn Conference conclusions. In that context, the draft resolution reiterates appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan on its path to advance the process and reaffirms the continued support of the international community in that regard. Last year, by establishing the Committee pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), the Security Council set up an institutional framework conducive to fostering the peace and reconciliation process. The first results are encouraging.

To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to all the delegations from all regions of the world that have actively participated in this year's informal consultations on the draft resolution. Their tireless efforts and sense of responsibility are the foundation upon which the strong message of the draft resolution rests. We are therefore happy to suggest that the General Assembly once again adopt the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan by consensus.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my colleague Ambassador Zahir Tanin, as well as to Counsellor Youssof Ghafoorzai and their colleagues, for their excellent cooperation, trust and friendship.

Germany also wholeheartedly thanks the United Nations offices in Afghanistan and New York alike for their excellent work for the future of Afghanistan. The role of the United Nations and its Assistance Mission in support of Afghanistan will continue to be pivotal in all the key areas I have outlined.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): It is an honour to be here today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Today we will adopt a draft resolution (A/67/L.16) that reaffirms the Assembly's commitment to Afghanistan's peace, stability and prosperity.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all representatives who contributed to the draft resolution, especially the German delegation, headed by His Excellency Ambassador Peter Wittig, for their dedication and leadership throughout the process. We extend a special thanks to Daniel Schemske for his role in facilitating the negotiations.

In 2001, following the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was a broken State with an economy in shambles, a shattered infrastructure and a society wearied by years of conflict. Virtually no aspect of life in our country had been untouched by war. Afghanistan has come a long way since then, and yet we still have far to go. Our path to lasting peace and sustainable development has not been without its challenges. On the way forward, the supporting role of the international community will be important, and it will have a considerable effect on how successful the Afghan Government's efforts can be.

Afghanistan is approaching the end of a chapter, with the conclusion of the existing framework of international military engagement. All focus is now on the transition to Afghan-led security, governance and development.

Transition in Afghanistan did not start in a vacuum. It took us 11 years to reach this point. International involvement began over a decade ago and sought to eliminate the threat posed by Al-Qaida and its regional terrorist allies to global and regional peace and security. After long years of conflict and war, a broad international coalition became engaged, with a commitment to see Afghanistan through on its path to peace and stability.

However, it was not only a military effort. The most important thing for Afghans was to rebuild an effective State. Afghanistan started its journey a decade ago to regain a legitimate and peaceful internal and international role in the region and worldwide. Since 2001, significant achievements have been made, from the building of schools and roads to the advancement of women, continuing economic growth and the strengthening of our security forces. Today, women are playing a vital role across all sectors of Afghan society and are being offered more economic opportunities. Millions of Afghan boys and girls are enrolled in schools, and increasing numbers of Afghan people now have access to basic health services.

Afghanistan is in a fundamentally different place from where we were in 2001, a time when the control of provinces changed hands constantly, human rights were routinely violated, violence prevailed and the central authority had lost its relevance and power under the pressure of internal confrontations. Eleven years later, Afghanistan is looking to the future with hope and is aiming to stand on its feet and move towards normalization.

In April 2014, Afghanistan will hold its third presidential elections to choose its new leadership, and by the end of 2014 the last foreign combat forces will have left the country. With the election and the end of the military phase of international support, a new chapter in Afghanistan is unfolding that is characterized by consolidated national sovereignty, self-reliance and stabilization of the situation. Those simultaneous developments represent the beginning of a decade of sustainability that involves a number of vital, interconnected elements in both the short and long terms. Those include the withdrawal of tens of thousands of combat forces, the full transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan national army and police, a new arrangement of the post-2014 international military engagement, the organization of free and fair elections, reconciliation aimed at ending the violence and bringing the armed opposition into the peace process, and capacity-building for a sustainable and functioning State that is able to maintain peace, stability and democracy in the country for years to come.

The transition framework is therefore the only path to long-term stability in Afghanistan. It puts the Afghan people at the centre of managing the country's security, governance and development. For the success of that transition, we need strong long-term support and delivery from the international community.

Over the past two years, the transition process has been buttressed by the establishment of new partnerships with the international community and by attempts to turn negative potential into positive by seeking new forms of cooperation in our neighbourhood and the wider region. Afghanistan has worked with international partners in that period to forge agreements on strategies to face the evolving situation in the country and to address all the necessary elements of a successful transition. From Lisbon to Chicago, we worked to map out the security transition. It is about enabling Afghan forces until and after 2014, sustaining logistical and financial support, and providing Afghanistan the necessary assistance for forces to work under the pressure of circumstances. Those plans are now in motion. The security transition is on track in its third tranche, during which 75 per cent of the country will be under the control of Afghan security forces. Afghan forces are ready to take full control, as planned, before the withdrawal of international forces in 2014.

We see the decision at the Chicago NATO summit — concerning shifting the role of the international military to a training, advising and assisting mission — as an important indication of enduring support for the Afghan people. Although more details are yet to be determined, it is important for Afghanistan to have the necessary guarantee of continuing military support as it assumes full responsibility for security in the country.

The post-2014 international military engagement in Afghanistan is part of the security agreement that we recently began to discuss with the United States in the light of our strategic partnership. Based on our national interests, we would like to see those negotiations lead us to an agreement that ensures long-term peace and stability in the country. The importance of national sovereignty remains at the heart of the Afghan perspective on any talks about future engagement between Afghanistan and its international partners.

A successful transition is about successful elections. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to organizing fair, free and democratic elections that can generate renewed energy for consolidating peace and stability. We would like to see the international community continue to support the upcoming election process. We are certain that the election process will help to bring about more certainty for the Afghan people with regard to the political transition. Furthermore, broader participation by the Afghan people — including women and men from all walks of life — and the engagement of civil society will contribute to making the next elections a new occasion for national consensus and unity that reflects our shared vision for building a better future.

The elections should be seen in connection with the ongoing major effort to bring about stability and end violence — the search for a political solution. We have witnessed visible progress in the peace process with the Taliban and other armed opposition groups. Serious steps are being taken to prepare the ground responsibly for peace talks and a possible breakthrough in the reconciliation process. Let there be no doubt: our peace process will not continue at the expense of the hard-won progress of the past decade, including on human rights and, in particular, the rights of women.

It is important to note that there is now consensus about the necessity for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peaceful solution and about the fact that the peace process is increasingly seen as a cross-cutting issue required for the success of the transition. We are encouraged by the increasing positive thinking among a growing number of the armed opposition actors and by the support of other main actors for the peace process. The recent visit of the delegation of the High Peace Council to Islamabad and the release of a number of Taliban prisoners by the Government of Pakistan are important developments for creating an atmosphere conducive to a political solution.

Mr. Beck (Palau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The efforts here at the United Nations have also been essential steps towards building the necessary trust and confidence in the peace and reconciliation process. We are happy to see the continuing focus of the Security Council and the greater role that the Afghan Government now plays in the listing and delisting efforts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). The Security Council's commitment was clearly displayed this week when the Chairman of the High Peace Council, Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, was asked to brief that Committee and the members of the Security Council on the progress made in the reconciliation process. That was an opportunity to illustrate Afghanistan's intention to have a greater role with regard to the Committee's work.

A successful transition will allay concerns about the possible vacuum created by the end of the military phase. In that connection, what is essential in the long term is the economic sustainability of the Afghan State. Assisted by its international partners, Afghanistan is working to ensure that the Afghan State can function effectively and that it moves from a primarily aid-based economy to a self-sustaining one during the transition and transformation period.

At the Tokyo Conference in July, significant steps were taken towards addressing that issue, including a clear expression of long-term financial commitment and the presentation of a shared vision in the form of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which addresses the need of our Government for core funding and the need of our development partners to know that the money will be spent well. In Tokyo, the international community committed to continued engagement in Afghanistan, while the Afghan Government committed to being financially responsible and and to focus on good governance.

Ending corruption and ensuring a transparent and efficient Administration that enjoys the full trust of the Afghan people remains a high priority. In that connection, the Afghan Government has redoubled its commitment to the rule of law and good governance. His Excellency President Karzai's decree of 21 July represents a comprehensive approach and instructs all ministries, agencies and independent departments to implement measures and reforms to eliminate corruption and improve transparency.

Global engagement in the past decade has brought about an unprecedented level of regional and international interaction in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has become a meeting place for dozens of global and regional Powers and organizations. The international community has been linked to the stabilization and reconstruction efforts in the country — a fact that is reflected in the level of troop contributions, financial support and institution-building. As we complete the transition, the current form of involvement will be replaced a multitude of bilateral and multilateral cooperation arrangements between the Afghan State and its global and regional partners. With that in mind, we have begun developing various mechanisms for bringing the greater region together for political, economic and security cooperation.

At the centre of that effort is the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. Over the course of this year, we have seen the Istanbul Process gain noteworthy momentum in its efforts to unite the Heart of Asia countries around the shared goal of peace and prosperity in Afghanistan, the region and beyond. The Istanbul Process is turning into a central forum for regional cooperation that will enhance and bring coherence to regional initiatives through the confidence-building measures and various mechanisms for cooperation to which we have committed. With effective regional cooperation, Afghanistan is reclaiming its historic role in the region, with the potential to serve as a trade and transport hub and a catalyst for broader collaboration.

Afghanistan's future is about sustainability. It is about consolidating our successes and not losing what we have worked to achieve over the past decade. For the remainder of the transition, we must not fall behind in our efforts for even a moment. The next two years are vital for the country. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to working each day to help the Afghan people by developing infrastructure, protecting human rights, enhancing good governance and improving the delivery of services, as outlined in the draft resolution we are considering here today (A/67/L.16).

However, the continuation of a violent campaign by the enemies of peace, stability and prosperity remains the greatest challenge to Afghanistan's progress. The irresponsible, vicious attacks on innocent Afghans — women and men — by the Taliban and other extremist armed groups are aiming to undermine our hard-earned achievements. But the Afghan people will not be deterred from their struggle to bring peace and security to the country and to eliminate sources of destabilization. It is important that this struggle be supported by all who want to see an end to terrorism and extremism. That is why close cooperation in the region, including with Pakistan, is essential. As President Karzai emphasized in his letter to Pakistani leaders on 13 October, there is a need for both countries to take coordinated, collaborative and serious action with strong determination against terrorism and extremism.

The Past decade in Afghanistan has seen historic strides. There are some who talk about a coming disaster as the international forces leave. We do not subscribe to such negative interpretations, but of course the future of Afghanistan hangs on many "ifs". We are realistic in recognizing the variables in the coming years, but it is our responsibility, together with the international community, to reduce uncertainties. We do not see the transition as a cliff that could be fallen off with just one false step. The transition is more than an idea. It is a concrete concept with real resources and deliberate plans — plans that can shape realities. Afghanistan looks forward to working with the international community in the coming years to achieve the noble objective of bringing lasting peace, stability and prosperity to the country.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Like others, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/67/354) and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I also thank all delegations that participated in the consultations on the draft resolution (A/67/L.16), introduced today by the representative of Germany. We look forward to its adoption once again by consensus.

The international conferences held in Bonn last year and in Kabul and Tokyo earlier this year, as well as the summit in Chicago, have reaffirmed the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community for Afghanistan's long-term security, economic growth and development. Those conferences have set out the way forward for Afghanistan to progressively assume responsibility for all aspects of policy and to achieve its security, development and governance goals.

In the EU statement at the Security Council debate on Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.6840), we briefly highlighted the important outcome of the Tokyo Conference, in particular the principle of mutual accountability encapsulated in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, and addressed the strategic issue of regional cooperation. The implementation of the Tokyo Framework remains paramount in achieving a successful transition in Afghanistan.

For this statement, we want to focus on two topics, namely, progress on national reconciliation, and preparations for the upcoming election.

We welcome the recent visit of the High Peace Council to Pakistan, and we call on all regional Governments to use their influence to encourage all groups to support an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. Progress will be sustainable only if the process is truly inclusive, not only engaging armed groups but fully involving civil society, including balanced regional and gender representation from all sections of Afghan society. Both the process and its outcome must respect the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions, in particular those on the rights of women and girls.

We also encourage particular attention to the progressive implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. In that vein, we wish to reiterate our firm commitment to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. We welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government to its full implementation through the establishment of the interministerial steering committee on resolution 1325 (2000).

We welcome the announcement of the date for the presidential election. It will be critical for Afghanistan's future that elections be as inclusive and transparent as possible and leading to an outcome that is widely accepted as legitimate.

We call on the Afghan authorities to engage all political parties and civil society in agreeing an electoral reform process that will put in place a legal framework for elections that is consistent with the Constitution, has credible measures to prevent fraud and is overseen by independent bodies. Early decisions by the relevant Afghan authorities on the system and registration process to be used for elections will be welcome, both to enable international support for the process and to allow for clear communication and voter education.

Allow me to reiterate our full support for the essential role of the United Nations as we move beyond transition. Its work will be of key importance in supporting the preparations for the upcoming elections and for monitoring the human rights and humanitarian situation and making coordination bodies such as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board work more effectively.

It is important that the international community remain strongly committed to progress in Afghanistan. That will require sustained support beyond 2014.

The EU commitment to Afghanistan is long-term. The EU is currently providing more than €1 billion in development assistance to Afghanistan annually. We will continue to prioritize and enhance support to Afghanistan in the decade of transformation agreed at Bonn.

The aim of our overall strategy in Afghanistan remains clear, namely, supporting a successful transition process in Afghanistan, partnering with Afghanistan beyond transition on its path towards becoming fully self-reliant, and building a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): It gives me great pleasure to speak today as a Chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on behalf of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and my own country, the Kyrgyz Republic.

The situation in Afghanistan affects global and regional peace and stability, as the matter of counter-terrorism is one of the important issues on which the international community and countries of the region are focusing their attention. Thanks to the strong support of the international community, the situation concerning political reconciliation and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan is changing. The country's economy is showing progress. Infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, bridges and power transmission lines, has made headway, and health and education have improved.

Yet, we must not overlook the difficulties and challenges that Afghanistan still faces in the course of reconstruction. There is no marked improvement in the security situation. Terrorist activities continue unabated, as seen in the terrorist activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaida forces and other extremists. Illicit drug production and trafficking are still rampant. Tension and internal conflicts in Afghanistan remain primary sources of threats to regional security and stability. We urge the Government of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to combat the Afghanistan narcotics threat more vigorously, especially in view of the undeniable fact that drug trafficking has become a major source of funding for terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

As SCO member States are all neighbours of Afghanistan, we closely follow the developments in that country and support the development of bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and countries of the region. The SCO member States support the efforts to make Afghanistan an independent, neutral, peaceful and prosperous country that is free of terrorism and drug-related crime. Our countries are of the view that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. That process is an important component of any Afghan settlement.

We also support the Afghan Government-led peace process, which aims at promoting dialogue with those elements in opposition to the Government that have renounced violence, broken ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, denounced terrorism and accepted the Afghan Constitution, in full respect of the implementation of measures and procedures introduced by the Security Council in its resolutions 1267 (1999), 1988 (2011) and 1989 (2011) and other relevant Council resolutions.

We have consistently supported the peaceful reconstruction of the country and have over the years provided all feasible support and assistance to the Afghan people. The SCO member States are ready to assist with the reconstruction of Afghanistan, including through the implementation of infrastructure, energy and transport projects, with a view to promoting sustainable economic growth and the creation of jobs in Afghanistan.

It gives me pleasure to inform the Assembly that the SCO member States have decided to grant Afghanistan observer status in the SCO. While emphasizing the futility of attempting to resolve the Afghan conflict by military means, SCO member States call upon the international community to continue to scale up its support and assistance to Afghanistan, as part of the comprehensive measures to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of the problems connected with the reconstruction of that country, which include enhancing capacities, improving the people's well-being and strengthening ownership and self-development capacities.

In the security field, the international community should continue to foster conditions that could enable the Afghan Government to shoulder security responsibilities. In the economic field, the international community should honour its commitment to assist Afghanistan's economic and social development. In the area of governance, the international community should help to enhance human resource development, while maintaining full respect for the right of the Afghan people to independently choose their political model of governance. The SCO member States will continue to strengthen and upgrade regional cooperation within the SCO framework and other existing relevant regional formats in order to build the SCO region into one of lasting peace, friendship, prosperity and harmony.

The situation in Afghanistan is now at a crucial stage. The SCO member States support the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts on Afghanistan and will assist the Afghan people with their national reconstruction. The SCO appreciates the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) aimed at fulfilling its mission and supports UNAMA in providing further necessary assistance for peace and for the reconstruction of the country within its mandate. It is the sincere hope of the SCO member States that a peaceful, stable, independent, sovereign and neutral Afghanistan that enjoys development, progress and friendship with its neighbours will emerge at an early date.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), that is, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan. The CSTO member States have carefully followed the situation in Afghanistan, which borders the organization's area of responsibility. We are seriously concerned about the escalating tensions in the country. We support Afghanistan's efforts to become a peaceful, independent and neutral State that is free from terrorism and narcotic drugs.

CSTO member States will help to foster Afghanistan's sustainable and secure development with a view to reducing the threats to international security from that country, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and religious extremism, among others. We note the importance of CSTO capacities in countering such threats from Afghanistan.

CSTO member States consider the illicit production, trade and trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan to be a threat to international peace and security. We intend to step up efforts to combat the Afghan drugs threat in line with the decisions of the third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact, held in Vienna on 16 February, while making use of the capacities of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) in combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, as well as while working together through the CSTO-led counter-narcotics Operation Kanal. We look forward to consistent efforts on the part of the Afghan Government and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) aimed at addressing the challenges related to drug production and trafficking. We stand ready to cooperate closely with NATO on a broad range of issues, including combating the drugs threat.

CSTO member States believe that the international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, should play an active and effective role in the political settlement process and in the recovery of Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government. We support the Government's efforts to strengthen Afghan society and transform the country into a stable democratic State. Member States support Afghanistan's active involvement in regional integration processes and in efforts to strengthen mutual trade and economic and humanitarian cooperation, as well as the swift implementation of infrastructure projects aimed at linking the region with Afghanistan, which will help to restore peace, stability and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan.

CSTO member States welcome the decisions adopted at the Bonn and Istanbul Conferences on Afghanistan in 2011, the fifth conference on regional economic cooperation for Afghanistan, held in Dushanbe, the Kabul Conference and this year's economic conference in Tokyo. We underscore the important role played by CSTO member States in conveying air and land transit cargo to meet the needs of ISAF forces in Afghanistan.

We support the process of national reconciliation in the country. It is our view, however, that intra-Afghan dialogue can have a positive effect only if a leading role in the process belongs to the Afghan Government and if there is strict compliance by the insurgents with three basic principles, namely, they must lay down their weapons, recognize the Afghan Constitution and definitively break their ties with Al-Qaida and other extremist organizations. We believe that following the completion of the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, ISAF's withdrawal should take place pursuant to a decision of the Security Council based on a report on the implementation of its mandate.

We note the role of other regional organizations, primarily the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in addressing the challenges with regard to military and political stabilization and economic recovery in Afghanistan, as well as the efforts of CARICC to combat illicit drug trafficking based on Afghan production. We welcome Afghanistan's receiving observer status in the CSO and CARICC.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express my gratitude to the President for convening this meeting of the General Assembly.

Tajikistan aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), respectively.

Tajikistan was pleased, once again, to join the sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.16, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan". We hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. Allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the German delegation for its work in achieving agreement on the text of the draft resolution.

Today, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture in its modern history. By the end of 2014, the transition process should be completed. Following the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghan law-enforcement bodies should be able to shoulder full responsibility for security in the country. Indeed, at this important and complex stage, the international community should provide Afghanistan with its full support.

Tajikistan is connected to Afghanistan by many historic and cultural links. Along those lines, our country is seeking to further strengthen good-neighbourly relations with Afghanistan and to develop and step up our bilateral, mutually beneficial cooperation. We support the international strategy for a comprehensive settlement and the post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan. In that context, we wholeheartedly support the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve the goals of national reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of the international community, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, to establish lasting peace and stability in that long-suffering land.

An important factor in ensuring sustainable socioeconomic development in Afghanistan is to get the country involved in the process of regional integration through economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring States. In that connection, I should like to note the role of the Dushanbe quartet, composed of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan, within whose framework efforts are being made to improve regional trade and economic cooperation and to counter the threats of terrorism, drugs and organized crime, as well as to develop human resources for Afghanistan's military and civilian needs. Tajikistan is actively involved in the process of establishing sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Given Afghanistan's need to develop human resources for law-enforcement and military bodies and to train professional specialists, my country has provided opportunities for training border officers and law-enforcement and security personnel in centres in Tajikistan, particularly the regional college of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

More than 500 Afghan students are currently enrolled in higher-education institutions in Tajikistan. In accordance with a decision of the Government of Tajikistan, grants will be awarded to approximately 1,000 Afghan citizens through 2025. Moreover, in recognition of the fundamental importance of developing education and training specialists for the needs of the economy in Afghanistan and the region, Tajikistan has launched the establishment on its own territory of a multidisciplinary professional and technical educational training centre.

Thanks to its favourable geographic location, Afghanistan can play a highly important role in developing regional integration processes. In the context of globalization, the significance of Afghanistan's geographic position at the crossroads between the various regions of the Asian continent can only expand. In that connection, Tajikistan fully supports the development and implementation of infrastructure projects in the areas of communications and transportation, both in Afghanistan and in the region in general. Tajikistan and Afghanistan are currently linked by five bridges spanning the border along the Panj River. That enables the delivery of humanitarian assistance and other cargo to remote areas of Afghanistan. It also helps to promote the growing trade between our two countries, as well as to expand transit capacity. A projected railroad between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which would also link to an existing Uzbekistan-Afghanistan branch and to two prospective Iran-Afghanistan and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan branches, has undergone international evaluation and is awaiting implementation. The route is destined to become a transit artery of regional significance that will promote the development of regional trade and economic recovery for Afghanistan.

In the current circumstances, energy is of key importance for rebuilding Afghanistan's devastated economy. The hydroelectric plants currently operating in Tajikistan, as well as those under construction, are capable not only of meeting Afghanistan's needs for ecologically clean and affordable electric power but also of broadening its agricultural development by restoring and improving its irrigation systems. In that context, I should like to note the special importance of building power-transmission-line projects through Afghanistan. Last year a 220-kilovolt transmission line began operating from Tajikistan's Sangtuda-1 hydroelectric power station to the Afghan city of Puli Khumri. The CASA-1000 trade and transmission project has been launched to help solve the problem of the shortage of power in Afghanistan and Pakistan by using the hydroelectric potential of Central Asian countries. We support the projected gas pipeline to be laid from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Tajikistan and Pakistan, which, besides supplying the natural-gas needs of the countries of the region, would also create a reliable source of income for Afghanistan.

The issue of Afghanistan's socioeconomic recovery was covered in depth at the fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Dushanbe in the spring. The Conference recommended the implementation of about 20 projects in the areas of transportation, communications, energy, investment, education, building human capacity, border control and other areas, which could contribute to Afghanistan's restoration and socioeconomic development. Establishing significant levels of peace and security in Afghanistan will depend on broad and effective international and regional cooperation and sincere, consistent efforts on the part of the international community to achieve goals that meet the aspirations and expectations of the Afghan people. We hope that the adoption of today's draft resolution by the General Assembly will serve that noble purpose.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan, contained in document A/67/354.

The year 2014 will see two significant events that will shape the next stage of Afghanistan's future. One is the complete withdrawal of the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF); the second is the presidential elections. They are equally important and should be looked at as two sides of the same coin.

On the one side, security in Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the success of political and economic reconstruction and transformation processes across the board. In that regard, Malaysia is encouraged that there have been fewer security incidents and insurgent attacks this year as compared with 2011. However, the figures are certainly not encouraging enough. The killing of civilians and the targeting of prominent individuals remain a concern. The international community must look at ways to counter such incidents. In doing so, it must take special care not to give further reasons for people to turn away from the transition process and join the insurgents. Civilian deaths resulting from military operations by international forces must be avoided at all costs. In fact, any civilian casualties will create resentment and fuel anger among the people, making efforts to ensure peace and security that much harder.

On the flip side, fair elections that are inclusive and free from external interference will ensure a competent Government that enjoys the support of the people. The Government can then concentrate on efforts to establish good governance, promote justice, human rights and respect for the rule of law, and foster equitable social and economic development in the country. That in turn will plant the seeds for lasting peace and stability from within Afghanistan itself.

Malaysia appreciates the continued support that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has given to the work of the High Peace Council and the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. We welcome the appointment of Salahuddin Rabbani, who has emphasized the need to improve inclusiveness in the High Peace Council. Malaysia is heartened to note that the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to engage with insurgents in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society have borne fruit. We believe that rehabilitated insurgents can help the Government in its efforts to restore peace through their active participation as local community leaders.

Malaysia is of the view that inclusiveness also needs to be extended to women. By getting the support of women, the Government would, in effect, further marginalize those who are out to create instability in the country. Furthermore, women would contribute immensely to development efforts. To neglect such a huge percentage of the population would only mean underutilizing the potential human capital available in the country. Afghanistan certainly cannot afford to do that.

Malaysia understands the need to take into account the cultural and traditional sensitivities in Afghanistan, which are based on religious beliefs. It is the same for Malaysia. We continue to take various measures towards achieving gender equality and women's development through various policy frameworks, legislation, capacity-building and entrepreneurial programmes. Malaysia wishes to emphasize the importance of women's education and health care and the need to change the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women in society, all the while taking into consideration the need to protect the sanctity of Islam. In that regard, we believe that Malaysia has much to offer, and we are willing to share our experience.

Many impediments remain in the run-up to 2014. It is obvious that the Afghan Government will need the assistance of the international community in its efforts to forge a better future for its people. We are pleased to note the success of the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan last July, which saw the international community pledge $16 billion in development aid over the next four years. The number of high-level representatives and the financial commitments made at the Conference send a clear message to those who intend to derail the transition and transformation process that Afghanistan will not be abandoned and will enjoy the support of the international community.

For our part, Malaysia will identify the specific areas of assistance and cooperation that we are able to extend to Afghanistan and its people under the Malaysia Technical Assistance Programme, with particular focus on capacity-building and human resource development. In addition, 40 members of the Malaysian Armed Forces medical contingent for the International Security Assistance Force, which includes women doctors and nurses, were deployed in July 2010 to provide medical, dentistry and other health-care services and capacity-building programmes to the Afghan people in Bamyan province. The team has managed to take local social and religious sensitivities into consideration while providing health-care services.

Malaysia has also been providing assistance in the reconstruction of Afghanistan over the past 10 years through various bilateral technical training and capacity-building programmes in a broad range of areas. We are pleased to note that a number of Afghan officials have benefited from the many technical courses that Malaysia has offered. In 2011 and 2012, Malaysia has contributed a total of nearly $14 million in humanitarian assistance and capacity-building programmes to Afghanistan.

Malaysia is cautiously optimistic about the situation in Afghanistan. We recognize that the next few years will be crucial for the future of the country. While we support full Afghan leadership and ownership, the international community must take steps to ensure that when ISAF leaves, the foundations have been put in place to allow Afghanistan to move forward. The international community must also ensure that the transition of power to the next President is done smoothly.

Progress has been made and we should capitalize on it. Afghanistan cannot afford to fall back into the despair of war. Malaysia will do its utmost to support Afghanistan's reconciliation and reconstruction process. We look forward to continuing to play a meaningful role in Afghanistan's development towards lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates supports the draft resolution before the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). We reiterate our support for all Afghan national efforts to expand the process of constructive and inclusive Afghan-led dialogue and reconciliation, including all segments of the populations and all political parties in the process, in order to achieve national unity, stability and long-term development. We also support the good offices conducted in that regard by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Mission of Norway and the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace.

In that context, we emphasize the need for the international community to adopt an innovative approach in providing more inclusive development support to Afghanistan in the economic, logistical and technical fields. Such inclusive support should be under the supervision of the United Nations and done in cooperation with international organizations, donor countries and other concerned parties to promote stability, strengthen national capacities and sreolve the internal problems of Afghanistan, as well as to organize, reform and develop its national institutions. That will enable Afghanistan, through its institutions, to carry out its full responsibilities, meet the needs of its people, consolidate security and enhance law enforcement.

In that regard, we welcome the gradual transition of security tasks to the Afghan National Security Forces, in accordance with the Kabul process, especially in the matter of extending their control over all regions of the country, preserving national security and achieving economic and social development by the time of the withdrawal of most foreign troops in 2014.

We would also like to stress the importance of the region's role in achieving security and stability in Afghanistan. The region should seek to put in place an inclusive package of security cooperation, confidence-building measures and multilateral support in several areas, such as reconstruction, health and education and in combating terrorism, extremism and the production and trafficking of drugs. We also look forward to further initiatives of cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in the areas of security, the economy and trade. In that context, we welcome the ongoing, constructive bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The United Arab Emirates has stood by the Afghan people from the very onset of their crisis. Over the past 10 years, we have continued to provide political and economic support through direct bilateral cooperation and as part of the international community. Our assistance aims to support the implementation of infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, including economic recovery projects and reconstruction, rehabilitation and development programmes in the health, agricultural, social and security sectors. We also support other multipurpose charitable projects aimed at restoring security and stability in all parts of the country, reducing the suffering of its people and improving all aspects of their lives.

The total contributions by the Government of the United Arab Emirates to Afghanistan since the year 2000 to advance its national economy amount to approximately $272 million dollars. That is in addition to private assistance from United Arab Emirates humanitarian foundations, including the Sheikh Khalifa Foundation, which, in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, made an estimated contribution of $100 million, earmarked for the mass immunization programme for Afghan children. Also, in July, the United Arab Emirates announced a grant of $250 million dollars, 80 per cent of which is earmarked for building houses for Afghans, including widows, orphans and the disabled, as well as for other development projects and the rehabilitation of a number of institutions in Kabul and other provinces.

The United Arab Emirates also participated in the implementation of several governmental and non-governmental projects in Afghanistan. They include the construction of training centres, road projects and infrastructure rebuilding, particularly in the areas of education and rural development. We participate as well in a demining project in Kandahar, which is expected to be completed within four years at a cost of $28 million. The United Arab Emirates also contributed to the international military efforts through the International Security Assistance Force of NATO for the purpose of reconstructing Afghanistan and providing support and assistance to its people.

We highly appreciate the considerable efforts made by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, under the command of NATO and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as by other partners of the international community, to restore security and stability in Afghanistan and improve the quality of life of its people. However, we call for focusing international action on accelerating the work of the implementation mechanisms of the country's national comprehensive development strategy in order to develop the capacities of the key sectors in Afghanistan so as to enable them to meet the needs of the people and to consolidate peace, growth and stability in all provinces. That should include restoring Afghanistan's traditional place both in the region and in the international community.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union and would like to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

We welcome the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16) and support its adoption by consensus. In doing so, we confirm our appreciation of the substantial contribution the United Nations is making to the stabilization of Afghanistan. Italy values the continued efforts that the Secretary-General and his Special Representative are promoting to that end and reiterates its full and convinced support for their work. We also commend the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in leading and coordinating the civilian efforts of the international community, the importance of which will grow as the military commitment gradually diminishes.

Over the past year, a series of important conferences has allowed the international community and Afghanistan to better define the terms of their relationship, which will go well beyond the transition process throughout what is known as the transformation decade. Afghanistan has made remarkable progress over the past 10 years in such fields as institutional capacity, economic growth, the enhancement of human rights and the development of its security forces. However, much remains to be done, and international support is still needed. That is why Italy fully supports the strong, credible, unequivocal message that has emerged from the meetings held in Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo, that is, the international community will not abandon Afghanistan after 2014.

As for our national contribution, through a decade-long presence, Italy has shown its steadfast commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Over the past months, we have stated our intention to stand by Afghanistan in a long-term perspective beyond 2014. The bilateral partnership agreement signed last January is the cornerstone of a relationship that will be based less on assistance and more on mutual commitments and cooperation on an equal footing.

I would like to make three comments.

First, while our Afghan friends must feel reassured in this perspective, it is equally important to highlight that a new, more mature and more demanding partnership is being forged. At the Tokyo Conference all parties undertook substantial commitments: on the one hand, the international community will continue to assure its financial and political support of Afghanistan; on the other, the Afghan Government is expected to make further progress in such areas as democratic reforms, transparency, good governance, and the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular women's rights.

As expressed on several occasions, Italy considers the issue of women's conditions a top priority. We recognize the tangible progress that the Afghan Government has made in that domain, enhancing the status of women in such important areas as education and political participation. Those hard-won gains now need to be preserved and further consolidated. We also believe that the full inclusion of women in Afghan society, on the basis of opportunities and rights equal to those of men, as stated in article 22 of the Afghan Constitution, will help Afghanistan achieve its development and security goals.

Secondly, the time has come for Afghanistan to turn over a new leaf in its history and overcome decades of conflict and turbulence. The success of the reconciliation process among the many ethnic and political components of Afghan society is a prerequisite for building long-term stabilization and lasting peace. We therefore encourage the efforts of the Afghan Government to advance this process. We believe that sustainable reconciliation can be achieved only through an inclusive, nationwide, collective commitment to peace, with the full participation of women and civil society, particularly in light of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Thirdly, the success of the reconciliation process is key not only to the stabilization and prosperity of Afghanistan, but also to the stability of the region as a whole. While fully respecting Afghan ownership of the peace process, we believe that the regional environment could help create the conditions for its positive advancement. In that regard, we appreciate the recent visit of a delegation of the High Peace Council to Pakistan, as it represents an important step forward in regional dialogue and is a sign of a common will to re-energize the process.

In the same spirit, we prize the initiatives aimed at enhancing regional cooperation with Afghanistan. In particular, we are encouraged by the progress achieved so far within the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, under the commendable leadership of the Afghan Government. We expect the action plans for the first set of confidence-building measures to be finalized soon so that their implementation can begin, and we reaffirm Italy's readiness to contribute to those measures concerning counter-narcotics and regional infrastructure. Meanwhile, a structured and genuine political dialogue among the countries of the Heart of Asia initiative remains a key component of the process, as it can strengthen mutual trust.

The upcoming elections represent a crucial test for the fledgling Afghan democracy. We are encouraged by the commitment shown by the Afghan Government, and we welcome the recent announcement of the date of the elections as an important step forward. It is of the utmost importance to guarantee the credibility, inclusiveness and transparency of the whole electoral process, so as to lead up to a legitimate and broadly accepted outcome.

Let me conclude by recalling the importance of today's draft resolution. The international community is speaking with one voice and the message it is delivering is clear, that is, the stabilization of Afghanistan remains a priority and the Afghan people can count on international support for the years to come. The year 2014 is not the end date of international commitment, but a turning point towards a future that is more and more in the hands of the Afghan people and Government.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): Japan is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution (A/67/L.16) before us. The unity of the international community in supporting Afghanistan is of particular importance for the long-term stability of the country. Adopting the draft resolution by consensus would send a strong message reaffirming that point. Sincere appreciation is due to our colleagues from the German delegation, who ably led the consultations throughout the entire process.

Over the past year we have indeed witnessed a series of important international conferences with decisive outcomes based on both the Afghan Government's determination to secure long-term stability and the long-term commitments of its international partners beyond 2014. Building on the outcomes from the Bonn Conference, the NATO Chicago Summit, the Kabul Ministerial Conference and the Tokyo Conference, Afghanistan now has a road map before it leading towards a stable future with economic growth.

Given that political and development momentum, I would like to stress the following three points, which are critical to the lasting peace and stability of the country.

First, in the belief that the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework serves as the driving force for allowing Afghanistan to achieve its political and development goals, Japan strongly urges the Government to continue making the utmost efforts to realize its commitments for a stronger and more accountable Government, as stated in the Tokyo Framework. In that connection, we welcome the Afghan Government's follow-up initiatives led by the Ministry of Finance and look forward to seeing concrete actions and tangible outcomes on the ground to follow.

Secondly, the road map before us will not bear fruit as planned unless it is reinforced by the sustained political will of the Afghan Government to proceed with the peace and reconciliation process.

Needless to say, this entire course is inseparably related to the improvement of the security situation through the building up of the Afghan National Security Forces and the advancement of the reintegration process. They must therefore be addressed in a simultaneous and effective manner in order to achieve irreversible progress. Given the final timeline for the security transition, there is no more time to lose.

The peace and reconciliation process is an Afghan-led process. Japan supports the High Peace Council's active efforts in leading dialogues with the relevant parties and especially welcomes the developments and outcome of the recent visit of Mr. Rabbani, Chairman of High Peace Council, to Pakistan. It is also encouraging to see other actors, including non-governmental and civilian institutions, being engaged in the process as well, as we believe that such initiatives, when well coordinated, could effectively complement the High Peace Council's activities.

Last but not least, we cannot stress enough the importance of the upcoming presidential elections in April 2014. The elections will be a testimony to all the efforts and achievements of the Government of Afghanistan and its people in all spheres. A wide range of interlinked challenges persist, including concerning security control, electoral law reforms, the elimination of fraud, an efficient voter registration system, inclusiveness, and others that should be addressed by the Afghan leadership with the continued support of the international community, headed by the United Nations. We strongly hope that the election results will lend much stronger legitimacy to the Government of Afghanistan and allow the desired advancement towards prosperity.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our determination to exert our fullest efforts for the peace and stability of Afghanistan as a Member of the United Nations and the unified international community. Let us adopt this draft resolution by consensus, without hesitation.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join other Member States in sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). The draft resolution reflects the fact that the international community remains committed to supporting the Afghan people in building a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan through the 2014 security and political transition and beyond.

We recognize the continued service of the United Nations in Afghanistan. We also commend the brave and dedicated work of the Afghan National Security Forces, the International Security Assistance Force and United Nations personnel who are helping to build a more secure Afghanistan.

Since we met last year, the Afghan people and the international community have continued on the path towards a responsible security transition and an enduring commitment to Afghanistan. The meetings in Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo clarified the path ahead. The transition is on track and the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan is resolute.

Afghanistan and international partners have charted a responsible road for the transfer of full responsibility for security back to the Afghans. The Afghan National Security Forces continue to grow in size and capability and should reach their goal of being 352,000-strong this year. The Afghan army is fighting in over 90 per cent of all operations and is leading nearly half of them. Through the third tranche of the security transition, 75 per cent of the Afghan population, including every provincial capital, will be part of the transition process. The NATO Summit in May confirmed that the progress will be supported by the international community beyond 2014. NATO and its potential operational partners will continue to provide training, assistance and advisory capacity as Afghanistan moves into the transformation decade.

Afghanistan's future will be realized not only by a strong, capable security force but also by the Afghan people's access to economic opportunity and a Government that meets their needs. The international community's total pledges in Tokyo of $16 billion in economic assistance through 2015 meet the World Bank's estimate of Afghanistan's requirements, just as the Chicago Summit met its security requirements. That assistance will help Afghanistan attract private-sector investment and help usher in a transformation decade marked less by aid and more by trade — all in a framework of mutual accountability, regional economic integration and shared responsibility.

The security and economic progress will further be bolstered by a region that sees value in peace. Afghanistan's neighbours and near neighbours have spoken in one voice to assure Afghanistan of their support for an Afghan-led reconciliation process. They endorsed the principles that need to guide peace and reconciliation at the Kabul Conference that was held over the summer in support of the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan.

Accompanying the security transition in 2014 will be a political transition. We welcome President Karzai's recent decision that elections will be held in April of 2014, and we also note the strong commitments made by the Afghan Government to strengthen and improve its electoral processes. That constitutional transfer of power through a credible and inclusive presidential election will be critical to maintaining stability and preserving support from international donors.

Afghanistan today shows the tangible effects of the efforts we all have made over the past decade. Kabul is now a commercial centre of over 5 million people. Schooling and primary health care have been transformed. According to UNICEF, 10 years ago fewer than 1 million Afghan children attended school and today more than 8.2 million children will receive an education, 3 million of whom are girls. Child mortality rates have fallen by half, and the number of health facilities has tripled.

The United Nations role in that process remains indispensable. In supporting regional diplomacy and through its development and humanitarian assistance role in Afghanistan, the United Nations continues to make a difference in the lives of the Afghan people. Countries of the region, together with the broader international community, have come together with the Afghan people in support of Afghanistan's future. In Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo we made the necessary commitment to realize that future. We applaud those efforts and support the Afghan people in that process.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I wish to thank the German delegation for the excellent work it has done in steering the negotiations on today's draft resolution (A/67/L.16). I also thank the Government of Afghanistan for its constructive engagement in the process throughout.

Today, I will focus on what the United Kingdom considers to be the key issues ahead in Afghanistan: first, the security transition from NATO to Afghan forces; secondly, the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process; thirdly, the 2014 Afghan elections; and, fourthly, the long-term international commitment to Afghanistan.

First, with regard to transition, 2014 is drawing near. NATO continues the important work of handing over security to the Afghan National Security Forces. The United Kingdom remains confident in the ability of all parties to get that done within the agreed timescale. We are confident because transition is working well and is on track. The Afghan National Security Forces are growing in strength and capability. They are taking responsibility for their own security and doing so with enthusiasm and professionalism. But we have always recognized that there is no purely military solution to the situation in Afghanistan, which is why peace and reconciliation remain key.

The objective remains the same: we support the Afghan Government in its attempts to secure a peaceful political settlement and agree that that should be done in unity with key partners in the region. The Security Council's renewal of the sanctions regime established under resolution 1988 (2011) next month will be an opportunity to contribute further to this process. We must ensure that designated individuals can travel to participate in reconciliation talks and that the designation criteria focus specifically on those who pose a threat to Afghanistan's security.

Secondly, it is imperative that we continue to build on the momentum and achievements to date. The United Kingdom therefore welcomes the visit of the Afghan High Peace Council to Pakistan earlier this month. We understand that the talks they held were very productive, and we are encouraged by the clear commitment of both parties to the peace and reconciliation process. We welcome in particular the call to the Taliban and other armed opposition groups to participate in the peace process and to sever links with Al-Qaida and other international terrorist networks. The United Kingdom will continue to do all it can to support efforts by Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen their cooperation on this important issue.

Thirdly, the elections planned for 5 April 2014 will bring many challenges, but we cannot underestimate their importance. The United Kingdom looks forward to credible and inclusive elections that deliver a peaceful transition of power to a Government decided by the people of Afghanistan. They will demand nothing less, and the international community should strongly support that objective. To achieve those aspirations, transparency is key. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to tackle the issues that have overshadowed previous elections and ensure that the prospects for voter fraud and violent incidents are reduced.

Finally, let me reiterate the long-term commitment of the United Kingdom to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to build on our excellent security partnership, to further social and economic ties and to form closer cultural links with Afghanistan. The Enduring Strategic Partnership document, agreed by the United Kingdom and Afghanistan earlier this year, provides the basis for those ambitions.

The international community as a whole has made clear its enduring commitment to Afghanistan. We are pleased that the draft resolution before the General Assembly today (A/67/L.16) is another signal of that. The NATO Chicago Summit, followed by the Tokyo Conference, provided clear evidence of that commitment. The pledges made on both occasions demonstrated the seriousness with which we are approaching post-2014 Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to meet the obligations into which we have entered, and we are committed to ensuring that all parties do likewise. In particular, we strongly support the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework as an invaluable mechanism to manage the commitments of the international community and Afghanistan to each other.

Finally, the United Nations has a crucial and enduring role to play in Afghanistan. We will continue to ensure that it has the right people, the right objectives and appropriate resources to carry out its important work.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I would like to thank the President for having convened this important debate, which provides the General Assembly an annual opportunity to review the progress made towards peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan needs the continued and active engagement of the United Nations and its Member States. We hope that today's meeting and this year's draft resolution (A/67/L.16), which Pakistan is pleased to be a sponsor of, will strengthen our collective commitment to Afghanistan.

After the decade-long endeavours of the international community for State-building in Afghanistan, the country is poised to assume full responsibility for its security and governance. The transition process initiated after the 2010 Kabul Conference generated the optimism of having a destination in sight. Since then, Afghanistan's progress in assuming greater responsibilities is discernible. Further progress on transition will require sustained engagement by the international community. This year's Chicago Summit and Tokyo Conference outlined the framework for such engagement. It is important for all pledges to be honoured and translated into action. There should be no repeat of a situation whereby Afghanistan is left to fend for itself.

This year, the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was reviewed with a view to aligning it with the transition process. We hope that will allow UNAMA to play a more productive role.

The Afghan Government's greater control of territory is encouraging. It can enhance public perception of greater security and confidence in institutional structures, which is critical for long-term stability.

The Secretary-General's latest report (A/67/354) includes an assessment of post-2014 Afghanistan. We agree that security and humanitarian risks associated with the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force must be addressed in a forthright manner. Four decades of war have made it clear that the vexing question of Afghan security does not lend itself to military solutions. Only a comprehensive approach can change the underlying dynamics of a deep-seated cycle of conflict. The Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process is a manifestation of that realization. It rightly seeks to address the root causes of insecurity and tackles the fundamental nature of conflict in Afghanistan.

We believe that the sustainability of the peace process will be ensured if all stakeholders share the goal of reconciliation. Afghanistan's international partners should facilitate such a convergence.

Externally imposed, impracticable caveats complicate the peace process. Similarly, the idea of coerced reconciliation runs counter to a fundamental lesson of Afghan history.

Pakistan supports an Afghan-led peace process. We fully support the efforts of the Afghan High Peace Council under the able leadership of Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani.

Pakistan has always emphasized the importance of regional unity to deal with challenges of security and development in Afghanistan. Immediate neighbours have a special role in the stability of Afghanistan. Pakistan is engaged in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan that aim to foster greater regional connectivity in order to promote economic and commercial cooperation as well as root out narcotics, terrorism and extremism.

Pakistan organized this month's regional ministerial conference on counter-narcotics, in which 13 countries participated. The conference declaration seeks to establish a regional contact group on counter-narcotics as part of a comprehensive regional approach. It charts a concrete road map based on agreed timelines.

Pakistan's bilateral relations with Afghanistan are driven by a sense of shared destiny. Our cooperation spans the entire spectrum of political, economic, education and cultural relations. There are regular exchanges of visits and continuous dialogue, including at the highest levels.

Pakistan is engaged in several reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan, including the construction of hospitals, roads and educational institutions. In 2010 Pakistan doubled the number of scholarships offered to Afghan students for higher education. Our official bilateral trade with Afghanistan stands at approximately $2 billion annually. The target to enhance it to $5 billion by 2015 is well within reach.

In the area of security, Pakistan has sought closer engagement with Afghanistan and its international partners on real issues that lie beyond polemics. We need further consolidation of our security and intelligence cooperation through the Tripartite Commission, which also includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force.

The interdiction of illegal cross-border movements is vital to countering the menaces of terrorism, drug trafficking and commercial smuggling. It is a joint responsibility that needs to be discharged more vigorously. Recently, Pakistan further enhanced its security presence on its side of the international border with Afghanistan, through new check-posts and regular patrolling. Our deployments along the international border far exceed the number of international and Afghan forces present on the other side. The presence of security forces on the Afghan side of the border needs to be enhanced. Effective measures should be in place to prevent cross-border attacks on our border posts, security patrols and border villages. The leaders of the two countries have resolved to address such matters using appropriate forums and channels. We hope that recent bilateral commitments in that regard will be upheld.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is often eclipsed by the glare of security and political challenges. That is unfortunate, as the country continues to suffer from natural calamities, food insecurity and the impact of conflict. We hope that shortfalls in the humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations consolidated appeal for Afghanistan will be rectified as much as possible, so as to limit the negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In hosting more than 3 million Afghan refugees, Pakistan is easing the humanitarian burden on Afghanistan at considerable economic and social cost to itself. During the past 10 years, Pakistan's average annual budget for Afghan refugees has nearly doubled. After 10 years of internationally assisted State-building efforts in Afghanistan, more refugees should be repatriated to the country. Creating pull-factors in Afghanistan is part of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees agreed to in Geneva this year. We look forward to its smooth implementation.

I will conclude by emphasizing Pakistan's abiding commitment to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. No country has suffered more than Pakistan from the conflict and instability in Afghanistan. No country stands to gain more than Pakistan from normalcy in Afghanistan. We are confident that, through unity and genuine reconciliation, the valiant people of Afghanistan will surmount all pressing challenges to usher in a brighter and prosperous future. Pakistan will remain their committed and steadfast partner.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, and I would like to add a number of comments in my national capacity.

This year we are celebrating the eleventh anniversary of the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. Spain has shared in that commitment since its inception, contributing a sizable military and civilian force in an unequivocal desire to help stabilize and reconstruct the country. The human cost to Spain's military contingent up to now has been high — 98 killed, 13 in action.

Spain is currently the ninth-largest contributor to NATO's International Security Assistance Force, mandated by the Security Council. Right now, there are 1,500 Spanish military personnel, spread out among Herat province, where Spain operates the airport, Badghis province, which is one of the most inaccessible and disadvantaged provinces in the country and where the headquarters for Spain's provincial reconstruction team is situated in Qala-i-Naw, and Kabul.

Spain firmly supports the Afghan Government's military and civilian initiatives in the complex transitional process. We are now entering the final phase of that process. In order for the transition to be irreversible and sustainable, the international community must redouble its efforts in the coming months, especially in the fields of governance, institution-building and economic development.

In Badghis the transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities is either complete or nearly so in five of the province's six districts, leaving only the Murghab district, where most of the insurgent activity is concentrated. We are pleased with the progress of the transition. Spain remains firmly committed to advising, training and supporting the Afghan security forces during the transition and beyond.

As for civilian aspects of the transition, in our areas of operation we are poised to transfer to Afghans the projects we have developed in the areas of sanitation, professional training, agriculture, female empowerment and water treatment, among others. That transfer in the social sphere will be carried out in tandem with the transfer in the security sphere. The overwhelming majority of those projects are already in the hands of Afghan personnel, and their transfer will be formalized in agreements to be signed with the respective Afghan ministries that will take them over. The end of the first quarter of 2013 will mark the end of the Spanish presence in Afghanistan, after seven years of fruitful collaboration. I underline, though, that Spain will continue to collaborate on projects in a multilateral way, through contributions to various international agencies.

Despite the difficulties of reconciliation, the recent visit by the High Peace Council to Pakistan gives reason to hope that dialogue will soon begin to move towards a sustainable, inclusive reconciliation process that bringings together not only armed groups but all sectors of Afghan society. Such a process would, and must, be in the spirit of the Afghan Constitution, especially in matters of human rights, particularly those of women and children.

The year 2012 has been one of significant international milestones with regard to Afghanistan. The Chicago NATO Summit in May saw agreement on the strategic plan for Afghanistan, which sketched a new allied mission after 2014 focused exclusively on training. The Summit also generated the general outline of how the international community could support the sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces post-2014. The Kabul ministerial conference in June pledged that the Istanbul Process — the goal of which is to promote regional cooperation and security and to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan in a regional environment conducive to security and prosperity — would be steadfastly urged forward. Finally, at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in July, the groundwork was laid for supporting financial security, which is clearly necessary in order to sustain the current democratic regime. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan renewed its commitments in the areas of governance, development, the rule of law, human rights and the fight against corruption.

The presidential elections scheduled for April 2014 will be a rigorous test of logistical organization, as we all know. The international community should provide all possible support to Afghanistan, which, in turn, must ensure the holding of inclusive, transparent and democratic elections with whose outcome the Afghan people can fully identify. The work and assistance of the United Nations will be of paramount importance in those elections.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore the great importance that Spain attaches to the role that the European Union can play in providing assistance to the Afghan authorities in capacity-building in areas such as governance, transparency, the rule of law and the training of Government, police and judicial officials and those related to the country's general socioeconomic development.

For all those reasons, Spain fully supports the ongoing negotiation of an ambitious partnership and development cooperation agreement between the European Union and the Afghan Government. That agreement will undoubtedly guide relations between the two parties in the coming years.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China endorses the statement made earlier this morning by the representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/354). China also hopes that the relevant draft resolution (A/67/L.16) will once again be adopted by consensus.

In recent years, with the help of the international community and thanks to the tireless efforts of the Afghan people, the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan has seen progress. The achievements in the political, economic, social and development areas of the country are recognized by all. With the effective strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces, a good basis has been established for the full handover of security responsibilities.

China firmly supports the efforts of Afghanistan to maintain its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to achieve lasting peace and stability. We welcome the achievements of the people and Government of Afghanistan in all areas. The Afghan peace process is now at a crucial juncture. The establishment of a peaceful, stable, independent and developed Afghanistan in the future requires the joint efforts of that country and the international community.

China supports the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts to resolve the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will continue to strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the Government of Afghanistan. In that connection, I would like to underscore the following four points.

First, efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in Afghanistan must be fully owned and led by the Afghan people. We support steps by the Afghan Government to strengthen its capacity-building. While observing full respect for Afghanistan's national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the international community must support the efforts of that country to increase its capacity-building and improve its governance in order to meet the objective of an Afghanistan governed by Afghans as soon as possible.

Secondly, the reconstruction of Afghanistan must continue and progress in its political process, and economic development, security, stability and national reconciliation must be ensured. It is crucial that the upcoming general election go ahead smoothly. China welcomes the preparations in that regard by the Government of Afghanistan. We support the leading role of the Afghan Government in the peace and reconciliation process. The transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan security forces must take place in a gradual and orderly manner and with the goal of ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, the reconstruction of Afghanistan requires the international community's ongoing support and assistance. The international community must meet its commitments to assist the socioeconomic development of that country by turning the $16 billion pledged into concrete actions. That assistance must fully respect the priority areas identified by the Afghan Government and must support full implementation of the national development strategy.

Fourthly, the Chinese Government fully supports the establishment of friendly relations with countries in the region on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. At the June summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Beijing, the Afghan issue was discussed and Afghanistan was granted SCO observer status.

China is carefully following the developing situation in Afghanistan. We have always actively participated in the development process of the country. We support Afghanistan's efforts to achieve its development, to improve the well-being of its people and to ensure its peaceful reconstruction in line with the Kabul process. China will continue to support the Government of Afghanistan as far as possible.

China and Afghanistan are friendly neighbours. The Chinese people have strong friendly sentiments towards the people of Afghanistan. China sincerely hopes that Afghanistan will soon achieve peace, stability, independence and development. China is ready to work with the international community and to make its own contribution in order to achieve those goals.

Mr. Abdrabbo (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend our thanks to Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his efforts, as well as those of his team, in the past years to achieve greater stability in Afghanistan.

Egypt stresses that stability in Afghanistan has a direct and positive impact on international peace and security in its immediate geographic surroundings, as well as regionally and internationally. From that perspective, Egypt supports the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to exercise full control over its entire territory by 2014 — the deadline for the departure from Afghanistan of the international forces. Egypt is certain that the active and ongoing bilateral cooperation between the two countries to enhance the civilian capacities of the Government of Afghanistan will help accomplish that goal.

Egypt underscores the importance of national Afghan ownership of all programmes established to enhance its capacities, with particular emphasis on those that affect the daily lives of Afghan citizens, given that such programmes will enable the Government of Afghanistan to undertake all tasks entrusted to it by the end of 2014. Increasing national ownership by the Government of Afghanistan of those programmes will enable the Afghan people to reap the dividends of peace, security and stability after decades of conflict and suffering. Taking a long-term approach will help achieve sustainable development in Afghanistan, which is the best means for achieving social stability in the country.

Egypt supports the efforts of the international community to help the Government of Afghanistan, especially the international conferences held during the past year aimed at intensifying cooperation and communication among Afghanistan and its neighbours and to raise the necessary international support and funding for building the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces so that they can extend their control over the whole of the country's territory. Egypt reiterates that it is crucial that Afghanistan's national reconciliation process be inclusive of all tribes and factions. As such, the Afghan experience in reconciling disparate social elements could be held up as a role model of the ability of different factions and tribes to live together, putting the national interests of their country above other considerations.

In conclusion, the problems that face Afghanistan are deeply rooted. The experience of past years proves that finding solutions to those problems will require a collective international effort enlisting the participation of all countries. We look forward to a prosperous future for Afghanistan, based on democracy, pluralism and safeguarded human rights for the Afghan citizens, who have struggled to achieve stability, security and improved living conditions.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to start by expressing our appreciation for the convening of this discussion on a subject of great significance to us, our region and the world. Let me also convey a warm welcome to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš. We thank him for his work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report detailing the work of UNAMA and offering his analysis of the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/354). I also express my thanks to the German delegation for coordinating and facilitating the intergovernmental negotiations that have led us to the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.16).

There were significant political developments in Afghanistan during the past year. One important political development is the gradual drawdown of foreign forces. As foreign forces prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, our efforts should focus on providing assistance and helping Afghanistan in its Afghan-led transition to a stable country. We need concerted international and regional support aimed at laying the foundations for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Progress on security and development is the key for peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan. Economic cooperation should be speeded up, along with political, security and other confidence-building measures, in order to ensure peace and stability for Afghanistan, and thereby for the entire region.

The withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan should be genuine. Obviously, the experience of the recent decades of foreign military presence in Afghanistan has taught the lesson that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved by military means. The continued presence of military forces, under any excuse or pretext, would only add to the instability and violence. The violence in Afghanistan has had a drastic effect on the security and well-being of its citizens. The violence is not caused just by armed extremists, inasmuch as a growing number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan have been caused by NATO operations. All sides should strictly abide by international humanitarian law and relevant international law, so as to effectively protect civilians. Afghanistan is passing through an important phase in its history. The Afghan people are inspired by the prospect of a future free from violence and war. The nation deserves our help as it seeks to take full charge of its destiny.

Another challenge for Afghanistan is the increase in the cultivation of narcotic drugs. According to the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012*, released in early November by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), total opium poppy cultivation has increased by 18 per cent and now covers 154,000 hectares, up from 131,000 hectares in 2011. UNODC warns that the rise in cultivation has occurred despite the Afghan Government's latest increase in efforts to destroy poppy fields and to help farmers find alternative sources of income. At the same time, the report indicates that prices for opium have remained relatively high throughout 2012, at $196 per kilogram. That provides a strong incentive for farmers to expand their poppy cultivation.

The *Survey* sends a strong message that the international community cannot afford to remain complacent in the face of the problem. A strong commitment is needed from both Afghan and international partners to curb the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking, which breed extremism. In that regard, we commend initiatives to fight drugs and the help in that fight offered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We welcomed the triangular initiative among Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan within the framework of the region's counter-narcotics efforts. We also welcomed the regional ministerial conference on counter-narcotics held in Islamabad on 12 and 13 November, which aimed at enhancing regional cooperation to counter narcotics. Taking those efforts into account, what remains is to implement measures to alleviate the serious concerns of neighbouring countries, transit countries of the drug traffic and countries of destination.

The issue of refugees is also a challenge, not only for Afghanistan but also for neighbouring States and the international community. Additional efforts must be undertaken in order to repatriate refugees and ensure that they are reintegrated into Afghan society. In that regard, we welcomed the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees held in Geneva in May and the joint communiqué it issued, aimed at the increased sustainability of returns and continued support for host countries.

At present, more than 1 million Afghan refugees are registered in Iran, while an even greater number of unregistered Afghans are also living in our country. Afghan nationals have continued to enjoy Iran's educational and welfare facilities, among others, and to benefit from the same subsidies that our own people receive. We once again urge the international community to continue to strengthen and expedite its efforts to create conditions conducive to the sustainable repatriation of refugees and their full rehabilitation and reintegration in their homeland.

The Istanbul Conference and the recent series of high-level meetings have strengthened the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as with its international partners. The process was further crystallized at the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Kabul in June, which set confidence-building measures as a priority. The meetings provided an opportunity to exchange views on how to move forward with regard to establishing a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. We hope that the confidence-building mechanism devised at the Conference and its follow-up meetings will promote results-oriented cooperation among all the countries of the region, aimed at developing Afghanistan's infrastructure in line with the wishes of its people, and paving the way for their long-cherished goal of achieving self-reliance and greater economic prosperity for Afghanistan. The United Nations has a key role in coordinating international and regional efforts in that regard and enjoys our full support.

We believe that capacity-building for Afghan institutions must remain at the heart of international efforts aimed at enabling the Government of Afghanistan to exercise its sovereign authority in all its functions. We are confident that more coherent and coordinated regional efforts, and the fulfilment of their obligations by international stakeholders, will contribute to ensuring Afghanistan's sustainable development and its people's prosperity. Building a sustainable, stable nation is crucial, not only for the future of the Afghan people but also for peace and stability in the region, Asia and the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always firmly supported Afghanistan in its efforts to maintain its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to realize enduring peace and stability. We hope that the international community will adhere to the principle of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process and continue to support the Government and the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve peace and reconstruction and to realize, at an early date, the objective of an Afghanistan governed by Afghans.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia is pleased to be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). We thank Germany for steering the negotiations and facilitating a consensus on the draft resolution, which we hope we will adopt shortly. In our view, it represents a renewed message of encouragement for the Afghan authorities and people, as well as a commitment on the part of the international community. The text covers every aspect of the country's achievements, while acknowledging the challenges that still remain.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to highlight some aspects of the issue that are particularly important to my country.

Afghanistan remains a top operational priority for the Slovak Republic. Our troops will continue to be deployed there for as long as the situation requires. In order to help build up Afghan security forces, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has enacted a new mandate extending our contribution to the International Security Assistance Force until 2014. We are also changing the makeup of our forces to better react to and reflect the evolving situation. We are reducing our engineering and guard capabilities and deploying a greater number of instructors, mentors and special forces. The main focus of the changes is on the building and deployment by May 2014 of a special operations task group, which will advise the Afghan army and police.

We also need to continue to build functional and credible Afghan National Security Forces. Now that the National Security Forces have almost reached the anticipated numbers, it is crucial to focus on their quality. As we see it, the main challenge is insider attacks, which have multiple negative effects on the overall situation. The Slovak Republic is ready to consider the possibility of sending civilian experts to the region if required. Our national legislation on the subject, which would allow civilian experts to be sent to participate in international crisis management activities outside the territory of the Slovak Republic, came into force this year.

Apart from our engagement in the area of peace and security, we are expanding all the components of our comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan, which is among the top three priority country programmes for Slovak official development assistance. For a more objective picture, the amount of our aid should be compared to the size of our country.

We are aware that Afghanistan will need help from the international community even after 2014. There has rightly been a focus on working on longer-term plans, and commitments are in place to help build Afghanistan's political, security and development self-sufficiency. To mention some examples of Slovak engagement, since 2004 we have approved 22 projects for Afghanistan, aimed at building schools in rural areas, providing education for girls and women, and supporting small enterprises, local TV broadcasting, capacity-building and civil society.

The Government of the Slovak Republic has already approved full debt relief for Afghanistan, and is ready to fulfil the pledge it made at the Tokyo Conference earlier this year, which it has since reiterated on several occasions through bilateral channels. We are ready to maintain the levels and modalities of our assistance in years to come while concentrating on the sectors of health care, rural and socioeconomic development and building civil society and security institutions. We believe that through targeted projects that are well coordinated and in line with the Afghan Government's priorities we can improve the daily lives of the Afghan people. Step by step, we can help to reach our common goal of a secure, stable and prosperous country.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Kubiš, for the dedicated and outstanding work being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We encourage the Afghan people and Government to strengthen their relations with the United Nations and to use the opportunity for cooperation with the Organization to its full potential. We believe that the central role of the United Nations remains one of the key factors in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mr. Husain (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution introduced today on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16), and we thank the German delegation for coordinating the process.

The past year was particularly important for Afghanistan's transition. The conferences that have been held in Istanbul, Bonn, Kabul, Chicago and Tokyo have enabled the international community to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring the security, stability and long-term development of a democratic Afghanistan. For its part, the Afghan Government is committed to enhancing transparency, responsibility and respect for human rights and the rule of law. This year's draft resolution reiterates and further enhances those mutual commitments. We are encouraged to see that it is once again to be adopted by consensus. That consensus is of particular importance during the transitional phase, whose success depends upon the cooperation and support of all partners in Afghanistan.

This year's draft resolution recognizes the role that the regional community plays in the transition and calls upon Afghanistan's neighbours to increase their cooperation in order to combat the Taliban. Paragraph 83 refers in particular to the critical role that regional cooperation plays in ensuring peace, security, stability and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan, while paragraph 85 recognizes the important need to strengthen trust and cooperation between Afghanistan, neighbouring countries and regional partners so that, together, they can combat the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, including the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban, Al-Qaida, the Quetta and Peshawar Shuras and the Haqqani network.

(*spoke in English*)

That language makes clear the critical role that Afghanistan's neighbours play in the stability and long-term prosperity of the country. Indeed, those who do not support stability in Afghanistan are working against the interests of peace and freedom, and may also be in contravention of Security Council resolution 1368 (2001). Canada also emphasizes the importance of holding free and fair elections in Afghanistan. We recognize that the Government of Afghanistan has already taken steps to reform its electoral system, in the hope of ensuring that future elections will be democratic, transparent, credible and inclusive. Yet more must be done.

We urge the Government of Afghanistan to take immediate action to continue to strengthen its electoral laws and processes in order to ensure that the irregularities and attempted fraud that took place in its most recent presidential and parliamentary elections do not recur. We also urge the international community and donors in Afghanistan to work actively to prevent fraud before, during and after the elections. That will help ensure that the people of Afghanistan have a voice in the future of their country and that indecision does not prevent the Afghan Government from meeting the demands of civil society and of legitimate political actors.

Transparency and accountability will be essential as we move towards transition, so as to ensure that international assistance is delivered responsibly, efficiently and effectively. Canada reiterates its expectation that the Government of Afghanistan will demonstrate tangible results with the assistance provided by the international community. Specifically, Afghanistan must follow through on the commitments it made during the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan to combat corruption and increase transparency in order to establish more effective and accountable administration at the national, provincial and local levels.

Ms. Murmokaite (Lithuania): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his regular critical reporting on the situation in Afghanistan. I also thank Germany and the sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.16. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Let me reiterate how much importance we attach to the United Nations efforts in Afghanistan. Given the reconfiguration of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the decrease in resources, a continued debate on the role and responsibilities of the United Nations in Afghanistan is necessary.

We welcome the further consolidation of the commitments to partnership and mutual accountability made by the Afghan Government and the international community at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. In Tokyo, Lithuania reconfirmed its commitment to continue political support for, and assistance to, Afghanistan in the run-up to 2014 and beyond. Over the past seven years, Lithuania has provided approximately €4.5 million in funding for a wide range of projects. We are determined to keep our development assistance at the current level and to support civilian and military capacity-building efforts after the transition has been completed. Education, health care, good governance and the rule of law are some of the areas in which the Afghan Government has achieved considerable progress and which remain critical for the future of the country. We will continue to work with the Afghan authorities to build administrative capacities, promote rural development, support women's empowerment and strengthen civil society.

My country is also determined to maintain strong support for the reform and further development of a sustainable civilian police force and rule-of-law institutions through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan. Lithuania has been contributing to that Mission and will continue to do so. The Mission, which is fully integrated into the wider international efforts to reform the Afghan national police, has been working closely to that end with key partners, including the United Nations. Our goal is make sure that its efforts deliver substantial results in the country's provinces. We are convinced that the Afghan National Security Forces are capable of maintaining security in their country, as it is their responsibility and their right to do.

Since 2010, Lithuania has focused on training and providing assistance to Afghan provincial security forces. In line with the objective of handing over full responsibility for security to Afghans by the end of 2014, my country will continue to support Afghanistan on its path towards self-reliance and security. In that regard, our Government has decided to allocate $500,000 annually to supporting the Afghan National Security Forces for a period of three years, from 2015 to 2017.

Afghanistan must maintain the pace of reforms. The development and smooth implementation of national priority programmes, improved transparency and accountability, the fight against corruption, and respect for human rights — in particular the rights and empowerment of women — remain essential elements if international assistance and domestic transformation efforts are to succeed. Prosperity and security grow when neighbours trust each other. Lithuania encourages Afghan efforts to foster international cooperation through the Afghan-led Istanbul Process. In September 2012, my country hosted an international conference under the theme "Afghanistan and the region: practical approaches for sustainable development," which brought together high-level participants from Afghanistan, Central and South Asia and the Nordic/Baltic region.

The conference was an opportunity to share best practices and successful examples of regional integration and cooperation. One of the conclusions drawn by participants in the conference was that free-trade agreements were essential between Afghanistan and its closest neighbours. Gains in education at the national level could be further supported through a regional network of universities. Regional projects in the areas of energy, communications, border management, the environment and other spheres would bind communities and people together. Free media also remain essential for fostering understanding and a sense of community. Political dialogue must be driven by the future agenda rather than past history.

In conclusion, our commitment to Afghanistan and our support for that country's stability, security and development remains firm now and will continue to be so after the transition period.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to express India's appreciation to the President for scheduling this discussion. I also avail myself of this opportunity to commend the German delegation for coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations in an excellent manner, which has brought us the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. As we have for the past several years, we are happy to sponsor draft resolution A/67/L.16, which has traditionally been adopted by consensus.

Major international and regional conferences on Afghanistan were held during the past year against the backdrop of the ongoing security transition. The international community renewed its commitment to peace, security and development in Afghanistan at conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo, as well as at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul.

As the Afghan Government assumes responsibility for security and governance, with the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by the end of 2014, we welcome the pledges of $16 billion in financial aid through 2015 that were made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, as well as the commitment to sustain support through 2017 at, or near, the levels of the past decade. At the same time, we are conscious that those figures represent the baseline, or minimum requirement, for Afghanistan to sustain itself.

The Delhi Investment Summit of 28 June, hosted by India, was an important endeavour in directing the focus of regional and international attention towards investing in Afghanistan and its potential to provide economic development and stability to Afghanistan during the transition period.

Amid the drawdown of ISAF and the accompanying economic downturn, it is indeed worrisome that the infrastructure of terror is still intact in the region. The Secretary-General's latest report notes:

> "Little has changed in the underlying dynamics to mitigate a deep-seated cycle of conflict. Furthermore, a diminished international presence will have a significant financial impact in many areas that, at least in the short term, may even exacerbate predatory behaviour". (*A/67/354, para. 62*)

Afghanistan continues to face an existential threat from terrorism, which draws upon ideological, financial and logistical support from beyond its borders. The security situation remains fragile, and there has been a sharp increase in the variety, spread and intensity of attacks by the Taliban and their backers. Moreover, the cross-border shelling of the past few months has caused large-scale disruptions to normal life and has sparked public outrage. The Afghan National Security Forces are ill-equipped to repel that challenge without substantial assistance from the international community. We need concerted action to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups.

As Afghanistan takes forward the task of national reconciliation, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Kabul Communiqué, we fully support regional confidence-building efforts as a critical component of international efforts to support the country. Regional cooperation and connectivity are critical for Afghanistan's political and economic progress. The Istanbul Heart of Asia Process is an important step in that direction. To strengthen that cooperation, India has taken the lead in two commercial confidence-building measures under the Istanbul Process.

We are fully cognizant that the economic viability of Afghanistan depends on its fuller integration into its neighbourhood so that it can regain its historical role as a land bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eurasia. The development of transport infrastructure and transit arrangements linking Afghanistan to the north, south, east and west, including through the Chabahar port, would benefit not only Afghanistan but also the entire Central Asian region by creating trade, transit and investment linkages.

Afghanistan and India have a long shared history going back over millennia. The two countries are natural strategic partners by virtue of geography and a common vision of peace and cooperation in the region. Our bilateral relationship is extensive, multifaceted and characterized by high-level interaction. President

Karzai visited India earlier this month. That visit offered an opportunity to review the entire gamut of the bilateral relationship and to discuss regional and international issues of mutual interest. During the visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reiterated India's support for Afghanistan during the crucial period of transition up to the end of 2014 and thereafter.

The implementation of the strategic partnership agreement of October 2011 between the two countries has already been set in motion with the convening of the first meeting of the Partnership Council on 1 May. During the past decade, India pledged up to $2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. We have managed to carry out some of the most economical and cost-effective projects in Afghanistan. The $500 million assistance announced by the Prime Minister of India in May 2011 is being spent from 2012 to 2015. The projects under consideration will be in line with the projects suggested under the national priority programmes of the Government of Afghanistan. The pace and nature of the utilization of present and future Indian assistance will be determined by the preference, comfort level and absorptive capacity of the Afghan Government.

India remains unwavering in its commitment to assist the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation. We support the good work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It is important that amid the cutback in United Nations footprint in Afghanistan and the reconfiguration of UNAMA due to budgetary constraints, all efforts should be made to avoid an adverse impact on its operational effectiveness.

Moving forward, we need to create an enabling environment in which the Afghan people can live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion or intimidation. The international community must continue to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose to strengthen the efforts of the Afghan Government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and are led by the Afghan people themselves.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the participating members of the International Security Assistance Force and other international agencies, as well as civil society, all of whom are playing vital roles in building a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. Over the course of 2012, the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan has further strengthened, while the Afghan Government's ownership and its growing role in security and economic planning have been steadily increasing.

The international community has demonstrated its renewed commitment to the Afghan people beyond 2014. At the Chicago Summit in May and the Tokyo Conference in July, the international community took steps to provide long-term financial support to the Afghan people in their efforts to establish sustainable peace and security and to rebuild their country.

For its part, the Afghan Government committed itself to achieving more efficiency and transparency in its governance at the Tokyo Conference. Efforts have also been made over the past months to enhance its security capability and to formulate its development strategy. In particular, the Government of the Republic of Korea welcomes the Afghan presidential decree issued on 27 July to implement Afghan commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. It is our hope that concrete actions will be followed and positive changes made on the ground. We also welcome the appointment of the new Chair of the High Peace Council in April as an important step in the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/67/354), the transfer of responsibility for security arrangements to the Afghan authorities is progressing as planned. As of now, 75 per cent of Afghanistan's population lives in areas where the Afghan Government takes the lead for security. By mid-2013, the Afghan forces will take the lead in ensuring security nationwide.

As we prepare for the mid-2013 milestone, closer cooperation between the international community and the Afghan Government will become all the more important so that the transition process does not hinder peace and stability in Afghanistan. In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the increasing insider attacks, as they could further affect the long-term prospect for stability in the country. While the Afghan Government should make serious efforts to prevent such attacks, the unwavering support of the international community will be needed more than ever.

At the same time, political reform and good governance by the Afghan Government will continue to remain vital to the successful transition. Building regional cooperation will underpin the stability and the livelihoods of the Afghan people. Furthermore, in the light of the Afghan presidential election to be held in 2014, it is even more important to make headway in the political process.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively supporting Afghanistan's capacity-building, especially since setting up a provincial reconstruction team in Parwan province in 2010. To continue such efforts, following last year's contribution of $50 million to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, the Korean Government will this year contribute an additional $50 million to the Fund, as well as another $50 million to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

Against that backdrop, my delegation welcomes today's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16), which embodies the political will of all Member States that support the Afghan people in their political and national reconstruction process. It is in that vein that the Republic of Korea joined in sponsoring the draft resolution as a way of underlining our unwavering support. I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Korea will remain committed to working with the Afghan people and their Government, as well as with the international community, to build a more prosperous, secure and democratic Afghanistan.

Ms. King (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity to sponsor the General Assembly's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/67/L.16) again in 2012. This was a crucial year for the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, during which we made strong commitments to support Afghanistan's future. That partnership rests on mutual assurances between the Afghan Government and the international community — that the Afghan Government will lead its people towards a stable, secure and self-sufficient State, and that the international community will continue to support Afghanistan during the transition and beyond.

As Australian Prime Minister Gillard noted in her speech to our Parliament last month, 2012 has seen significant progress in planning beyond transition, with a comprehensive international framework for supporting Afghanistan beyond 2014 now in place. Australia too has made significant commitments in that regard. We have established important agreements this year to underpin and strengthen bilateral relations. Prime Minister Gillard and President Karzai signed a comprehensive long-term partnership in May that establishes a broad framework for bilateral cooperation beyond the transition. In July, Afghan and Australian ministers also signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Development Cooperation.

Australia has increased its financial and development assistance beyond 2014. Our development assistance will increase from $165 million to $250 million per year by 2015, and we will provide $100 million per year to sustain Afghan National Security Forces sustainment from 2015 to 2017.

Throughout the transition period, Australia will continue to provide support to Afghanistan, centred on Uruzgan province, where we lead the provincial reconstruction team and where, in October, we assumed command of the combined team. In the latter framework, Australian troops, diplomats and aid workers cooperate and work in partnership with their Afghan counterparts on a daily basis.

In 2012, the Afghan Government itself has made significant commitments. The year ahead will see Afghanistan implement reforms to improve governance, prepare for the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015, bolster anti-corruption efforts and promote and protect human rights. We commend the revitalization of the High Peace Council and its efforts to work towards a political solution, including through the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. The international community, particularly the United Nations, has a key role to play in supporting those efforts, and the peace process must include all sectors of Afghan society and involve the active participation of women.

Australia welcomes the agreement between Afghanistan and the international community enshrined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Implementing those principles and goals should guide our partnership next year, in 2014 and throughout the next decade.

Afghanistan has already shown demonstrable progress. We welcome the Independent Election Commission's announcement, endorsed by President Karzai, that the presidential election will be held on 5 April 2014. A credible, inclusive and transparent presidential election will be essential to political transition in Afghanistan and will mark the significant progress made over the last decade.

We are pleased to see that the General Assembly draft resolution before us welcomes the recent progress. But it also realistically highlights the challenges that Afghanistan and the international community continue to face. At the most fundamental level, we must continue to ensure that Afghanistan will never again become a safe haven for international terrorism. We all have a stake in preventing the return of international terrorism to Afghanistan.

We also need to continue the fight against narcotics and drug trafficking. We must persist in efforts to promote regional cooperation through bodies such as the Heart of Asia group of countries. And we must continue to encourage anti-corruption reforms.

Australia welcomes the emphasis placed in the draft resolution on support for Afghanistan's efforts to protect human rights, particularly those of women and girls, to organize elections and, of course, to provide security to the Afghan people. All of those efforts will be Afghan-led, and the draft resolution rightly emphasizes that. But it also demonstrates the international community's ongoing support for Afghanistan's own efforts.

The United Nations continues to play a critical role in Afghanistan's long-term development and stability. We welcome the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts to support human rights, governance and the rule of law, preparations for elections, humanitarian assistance, reintegration and counter-narcotics efforts.

We again welcome the Secretary-General's assurances in his quarterly report (A/67/354) that, despite the reconfiguration of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), coupled with a significant reduction in its resources, the United Nations commitment to Afghanistan remains steadfast. Australia continues to strongly support UNAMA's mandate.

My Government has made Afghanistan's development and stability a key priority. Australia's term on the Security Council will coincide with a critical time of transition in Afghanistan and with our continued efforts to implement a comprehensive framework for Afghanistan's future. Australia remains committed to working with the Afghan Government, the Afghan people and international partners to achieve the common goal of a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 38. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.16.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since draft resolution A/67/L.16 was submitted, the following countries have also become sponsors: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Eritrea, Greece, Haiti, Indonesia, Malta, Micronesia, Morocco, New Zealand, Palau, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.16?

Draft resolution A/67/L.16 was adopted (resolution 67/16).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations

A/67/PV.42

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

42nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 28 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 12

Sport for peace and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/282)

Draft resolution (A/67/L.26)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Monaco to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.26.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): In my capacity as co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace and on behalf of my co-Chair Tunisia and the other sponsors of today's draft resolution, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace", contained in document A/67/L.26. On behalf of the Group of Friends, I would also like to welcome our new members, Japan and Denmark.

The year 2011 marked the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and of that Office within the United Nations. The efforts led by the Special Advisers, Mr. Ogi and Mr. Lemke, during the past 10 years have helped to establish the recognition of sport as a tool for promoting the goals of peace and development, as enshrined in the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. Sport has adopted values that tend to promote social inclusion, gender equality, tolerance, respect for rules and health through its striving to outdo itself. Support for such values is fundamental and should be encouraged in a world dealing with new challenges every day.

In the context of the duty we bear to strive for a peaceful, better world, we must put to good use all of the means available to us, and sport is one of them. We can all use sport, collectively or individually, in many situations, as the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/282) emphasizes. That is because, where politics sometimes fail and life discriminates, sport can bring divided and devastated peoples and communities together and include everybody, regardless of social class, age, race and even disability.

This year's biennial draft resolution introduces a new programme oriented towards the work of the Office of the Special Adviser, to whom I would like to express our sincere congratulations on his leadership and the determination with which he has been working on the ground, both concretely and effectively, to further our goals. He has succeeded in meeting the challenge of integrating sport as an instrument capable of responding to a large number of cross-cutting issues relating to implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In many situations he has shown that sport can contribute significantly to dealing with society's problems.

The draft resolution also highlights the crucial and growing importance of women in sport and how essential it is to empower them, if we are to achieve lasting development. Similarly, it seeks to encourage the full participation of developing countries, especially the least developed, in efforts to develop national sports

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institutions and capacities that will enable them to take advantage of economic opportunities.

In the light of the success and enormous popularity of some of the great recent sporting events, the draft resolution seeks to acknowledge and strengthen private-public partnerships in sport, which can have very positive effects on the development of social and institutional infrastructures. The draft resolution also welcomes the numerous partnerships established between the United Nations system and the International Olympic Committee since its attainment of observer status in the General Assembly. It also affirms the contribution that the Olympic movement has made to establishing sport as a unique means of promoting peace and development, particularly through the Olympic Truce.

In my national capacity, I would also like to recall the Principality of Monaco's commitment to further strengthening the power of sport. Their Serene Highnesses Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene, themselves both Olympians, are determined to promote sport as a tool for development and peace. Both within the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, which we are pleased to say is mentioned in the text of the draft resolution for the first time, and in its general policies, Monaco seeks to promote dialogue and facilitate and encourage the integration of sport in order to achieve the goals of the United Nations.

Sport's unprecedented ability to mobilize people gives us this opportunity, now fully recognized, to defend our ideals and share our ambitions to fight poverty and achieve peace. It is in that spirit that the International University of Monaco and the University for Peace have formed a partnership, which, supported by Peace and Sport, a global initiative under the high patronage of Prince Albert II, enables students to take master's degrees in innovative subjects such as lasting peace through sport. I would also like to recall the sixth Peace and Sport International Forum, which just took place in Sochi in the Russian Federation and which discussed the effectiveness of the Olympic Games as a diplomatic platform.

I cannot close without offering the Government of Monaco's hearty congratulations to the British authorities for the magic moments they gave us during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London. On a technical point, I would also like to thank all the sponsors of the draft resolution and note, for those wishing to become sponsors, that the list will be open until the end of the debate on this agenda item.

Mrs. Harbaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to express my delegation's satisfaction with the publication of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Sport for development and peace: mainstreaming a versatile instrument" (A/67/282), and to welcome the activities undertaken during the past year within the United Nations system, particularly by the Office on Sport for Development and Peace. I would also like to emphasize my delegation's appreciation for the untiring and continuing efforts of Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace. We wish him every success in his worthy task and assure him of our full support in his efforts to maximize the success of programmes to promote sport around the world.

Sport is a determining element in setting norms of good citizenship and therefore plays a special role in promoting the coherence of a healthy social fabric. We believe that access to sport is a fundamental social right and that sport is an important agent for social cohesion and development. It promotes high values and contributes to a solid education for our children and young people.

Sport has become part of the United Nations value system — an effective tool to be included from now on as one of our Organization's main themes. I reiterate Tunisia's resolve to take steps to enlist sport's capacity to promote communication and understanding and make it a powerful national and international agent for inclusion and development, as well as a means to promote solidarity, tolerance and cultural and personal diversity. I also welcome the interest shown in sport by the whole of our membership and the general belief in its worldwide utility as a tool for promoting peace, development, education and health.

I take this opportunity to voice our warm congratulations to the United Kingdom on having organized the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London. Those two events solidified the principle of the Olympic Truce and the ideals of the United Nations and the Olympic movement — friendship among peoples, harmony, non-violence and non-discrimination. They also clearly demonstrated sport's ability to promote unity and friendship and the shared spirit of sportsmanship among athletes and fans, no matter what their origins, political leanings or faiths. I also want to congratulate the Russian Federation on its upcoming Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2014 in Sochi and the Brazilian Government for its selection to host two major sporting events, the 2014 International Federation of Association Football World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016.

Given the potential of sport to inspire and its vital contribution in energizing new generations avid for physical and mental health, Tunisia urges Member States to take all measures necessary to address the dangerous phenomenon of doping, which threatens not only athletes' health but also the image and credibility of sporting events. We welcome the growing number of Member States that have signed the International Convention against Doping in Sport. It is also important to ensure that education systems and civil society organizations educate young people about the ethics of sport and sportsmanship, so as to prevent sports arenas and events from being used to promulgate racist, xenophobic and exclusionary slogans.

Zealous to nurture the tradition of sportsmanship and to utilize sport in the promotion of universal shared values for the benefit of future generations, my country joins Monaco in introducing draft resolution A/67/L.26, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace", on behalf of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace and the sponsors.

The draft resolution urges all concerned parties to cooperate with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General in expanding awareness of the importance of including sport in development programmes, and encourages Member States to name focal points on sport for development and peace, as well as to create innovative partnerships with the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace. I hope that the draft resolution will enjoy the support of all Member States, which would send a strong message to the men and women working nobly to promote the practice of sport and raise the cheer of all athletes.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Charter of the United Nations, drafted in San Francisco, set out principles for what was to be a new system of international relations that would prevent a repetition of the horrific experiences of the twentieth century's two World Wars. The primary challenge set out in the first sentence of the Preamble is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to create a democratic, equitable world order based on equal respect for the dignity of all people.

The Organization that we belong to today was created for those purposes, with the stated goal of maintaining international peace and security, based on the ideals of the sovereign equality of all Members, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the non-use or threat of use of force and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. The promise was also held out that all peoples would achieve economic and social progress.

However, after more than six decades of the Organization's existence, we are witness to a dismal economic and social picture, characterized simultaneously by the economic and financial crisis, the food and energy crises and the harmful impact of climate change, every day further endangering the human race. As a result of those problems, themselves the result of the current unjust and inequitable international order, the efforts of the countries of the South to achieve progress and development have been hampered. Today more than ever we must forge a climate of international peace, through solidarity, cooperation and multilateralism as our fundamental values.

Sport is an important aspect of national and international development. Cuba believes that the practice of sport strengthens solidarity and friendship among nations — elements critical to peace, development and cooperation among nations. Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, sport ceased to be an exclusive activity in our country, becoming instead a right enjoyed by all. In order to exercise that right, we have promoted an educational system that includes physical education as an integral component of human development at all stages. That has led to resounding successes in regional and international competitions. An example is Cuba's success in the 2012 London Olympic Games, in which our small developing country ranked sixteenth in the number of medals won. We are one of the first developing countries to rank that high. Similarly, Cuba ranked fifteenth in this year's Paralympic Games, in its best performance to date, winning nine gold medals.

We strive for early sports training for our children, allowing us to nurture unique talents destined to meet and raise the standards set by our country on the international sports stage. At the same time, we oppose an athletic spirit motivated purely by financial gain. We therefore condemn the theft of athletic talent, which negatively impacts developing countries.

For years the Cuban sport movement, led by the Cuban Olympic Committee and the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation, has provided impartial assistance to various countries of the South based on bilateral agreements, sending technicians, trainers and teachers, who, in their own modest way, have conveyed our training methods in the field of sport and have enhanced the success and increasing involvement in sport in those countries, thereby forging strong ties of brotherhood and friendship between peoples.

We have also strengthened international cooperation by making available to countries of the South the Institute for Sports Medicine and the Anti-doping Laboratory, to help fight the scourge of drugs that is corrupting athletes and that impedes fair play and the education and culture of athletes and trainers. Furthermore, Cuba founded the International School of Physical Education and Sports, which is devoted to training professionals whose fundamental value is solidarity and who are able to transform physical education and sports in their countries.

We would also like to highlight that the countries of the South also deserve to host the Olympic Games, a forum for brotherhood and solidarity in sports that is free from commercial interests. We are certain that the 2016 Olympic Games, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, will be a success for all the South.

We shall further develop international cooperation and solidarity through the Olympic ideal. Let us invest in projects of education, culture, sports and health, instead of spending billions on weapons. Much could be done for the right to development of billions of people worldwide using relatively few resources, if all countries had the genuine political resolve to do so.

For its part, Cuba reiterates its decision to keep sharing, to the best of our ability, our principal resource, namely, the human capital created by the Cuban Revolution and our best experiences.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for convening today's debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/67/282).

The practice of sports is deeply rooted in Brazilian culture and society. Access to sports constitutes a fundamental social right enshrined in our Constitution. The Brazilian Government firmly believes in the potential of sport as an important factor for social inclusiveness and development. We also consider it a tool for fostering role-model values concurrently with a solid upbringing for all our children and youth. Accordingly, sport in Brazil is traditionally regarded as being instrumental in forging good standards of citizenship, thereby playing a special role in maintaining a healthy social fabric

It is therefore with the utmost satisfaction that Brazil welcomes the imminent adoption of draft resolution A/67/L.26 on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, which we gladly co-sponsor. That effort seems to be in close harmony with chief initiatives and programmes undertaken by Member States and international organizations in relation to the advancement of sport in an integrated manner consistent with measures for equitable and inclusive social and economic development.

The Brazilian Government envisages sport as part of a broader set of policy objectives that also encompasses access to education and health. We believe that dealing with sport in such an integrated and holistic way contributes to creating conditions conducive to peace and development.

Bearing that in mind, the Brazilian Government has launched a series of initiatives that focus on multi-stake partnerships with representative institutions from across our civil society. For instance, we have undertaken a programme that employs 12,000 inmates from State prisons in manufacturing sports equipment, whose output is used in other educational sports programmes carried out by the Brazilian Government. In addition, the so-called Second Half programme, which benefits more than one million people, proposes part-time sports activities to children and youngsters enrolled in public schools. Likewise, pursuant to previous recommendations on the subject, Brazil develops international sports cooperation projects in partnership with other developing countries, such as Benin, Botswana, Kenya, Palestine, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. We remain engaged in increasing and expanding the scope of those programmes with other countries as well as in launching initiatives in cooperation with United Nations agencies and programmes.

We find ourselves at the beginning of an exciting sport-centred decade. Over the next few years, Brazil will host three sports mega-events — the International

Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup in 2013, next year, the FIFA World Cup in 2014, and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016. In the coming years, sports will be at the top of the Brazilian social, political and economic agenda. We welcome all to the aforementioned events in Brazil.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The decision to host these mega-events is consistent with the priority granted to the promotion of sustainable development and social inclusiveness. Hence the Brazilian Government remains committed to fostering and adopting public policies that ensure that hosting those events will help generate more jobs, improve our nationwide infrastructure and increase opportunities for Brazilian youth. Brazil also hopes that the mega-events will provide an opportunity for us to share experience in promoting sports as a means to achieve social inclusiveness and enhance the development of partnerships with other nations, especially developing ones.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Baron Pierre de Coubertin believed that building peace and a better world required providing young people with a sports education and opportunities to get involved with sports. Thus it would be possible to create a lifestyle based on the happiness that comes from effort, from the educational value of a good example and from respect for the fundamental ethical principles. That legacy remains in full force, as was demonstrated by the impeccable Olympic and Paralympic Games in London, where maximum effort, unity, friendship and fair and healthy competition filled our lives to overflowing and flourished as common values of humankind.

Sport plays a relevant role in the promotion of social development and is a means par excellence for communication between peoples and for the maintenance of world peace. That is why Costa Rica welcomes the fact that the United Nations has included it on its agenda.

Our country recognizes the potential of sport as a universal practice that contributes to educating people in the values of respect, diversity and tolerance. We also recognize the value of sport as a means to combat all forms of discrimination. Accordingly, we must make the necessary efforts to ensure that sport is fully included in our national development agendas. Sports and physical activity must not be omitted or sidelined from the challenges that a country faces, Quite the contrary, they should be part of the process of transformation for a country's full development. The organizing committees of major international sports events have recognized the legacy that games can leave by raising awareness on matters such as social inclusion and human rights and by fostering opportunities to create and transform infrastructure with positive long-lasting effects.

Last year, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 66/5, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". Even more significant was the fact that it was the first time in history that a resolution was co-sponsored by the 193 States Members of the United Nations. Only sport has been able to achieve that feat.

Sport is more than a luxury or a form of entertainment; it is more than just winning medals. Access to and participation in sport and in physical activity are essential to lead a full and healthy life. Moreover, sport has also proved to be an instrument for the most disadvantaged, for public health and for social inclusion, in particular when focused on education and prevention. It empowers minorities and enables them to have a dignified place in society, as the Paralympic movement and streetfootballworld have accomplished.

Sport also has a strong impact on the global economy in the creation of employment, in the development of new undertakings and in public investment. The United Nations and other international entities, including the International Olympic Committee and the international sports federations, have begun to recognize, beyond elite sports, the enormous potential of widely participatory sports as a generator of social change. Athletes can be a valuable instrument in promoting social stability, reconciliation and dialogue. As models for behaviour, they can help raise awareness of matters such as participation, non-discrimination, gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities.

For the first time in its history, San José, the capital of Costa Rica, will host in February 2013 the Central American Games, which were established just a few years ago. The President of the Republic and the Mayor of San José have expressed their total commitment to the organization of those Games, as they are an excellent opportunity to use sports to promote the values of peace, human security and social development among the Central American family.

In addition to that effort, our country continues to work shoulder to shoulder with various international organizations related to sport. Along with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, and with other Member States, we are promoting the initiative to organize in Geneva a group of friends of sport for development and peace to replicate the group that already exists in New York. Together with the International Olympic Committee and the National Olympic Committee of Costa Rica, we are seeking opportunities for cooperation using sport as an instrument of social prevention. Together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, we are promoting the organization of a programme for young people at social risk. Working with the Alianza A Ganar, we have developed a programme for training and employing youth through sport. With the non-governmental organization Peace and Sport, we are working to establish a regional forum for peace and sport in Costa Rica. With regard to gender matters, in 2011 we signed the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport.

We trust that the international community will continue on its steady path towards achieving the ideals that were outlined by Baron de Coubertin more than one hundred years ago for the benefit of humankind.

Mr. Stone (Australia): Australia is committed to the principles of sport for development and peace and to the role the United Nations can play in furthering those principles. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on this subject introduced this morning (A/67/282) and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for his ongoing efforts to promote the United Nations work in this field. We would also like to thank Monaco for introducing draft resolution A/67/L.26, which is before us today. Australia is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Sport's popularity, its capacity as a communication platform and its ability to connect people make it a tool that can be used to meet a range of development objectives, including contributing to the Millennium Development Goals. Australia, with a reputation as a sporting nation, is well placed to use sport as a vehicle to contribute to targeted development outcomes. The Australian Sports Outreach Programme supports major programmes in seven countries and provides grants for smaller activities in over 40 countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

The Australian Government's approach to using sport to meet development objectives identifies specific development outcomes in two key areas where we believe we can make a real difference and deliver real results.

The first regards reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke, which place a significant burden on health systems in developing countries already struggling to cope. They also reduce productivity and household income, keeping poor people poor. Sport can play a powerful role in addressing the risk factors causing NCDs, including physical inactivity, unhealthy diets and harmful tobacco and alcohol use.

In March 2012, Australia, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, convened a Healthy Islands Through Sport Forum in Brisbane. This regional meeting of senior officials of Pacific ministries of health and sport aimed to facilitate ongoing collaboration and multisectoral action to address the risk factors that cause non-communicable diseases.

Secondly, the Australian Government programmes emphasize the role of sport in enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. Sport can foster the inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities and facilitate social inclusion. For instance, Australian activities have been provided to increase community awareness about people with disability in Fiji, where the Inspiring Fijians rugby team – a combined rugby team from Fiji's special schools — playing in front of large crowds and inclusive community sports festivals have helped promote more positive attitudes towards people with disability.

Australia also has a number of programmes to address the involvement of women and girls in sport-related activities. These include the sport leadership grants for women, which provide opportunities for training and skills development to enable women to take on leadership and decision-making roles in sport.

Australia recognizes the need for all parties around the world to be vigilant in protecting the integrity of sport. Issues such as doping in sports and illegal sports betting have great potential to undermine the ability of sport to be used as a vehicle for development.

Mr. Williams (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on sport for development and peace (A/67/282), as well as the latest draft resolution (A/67/L.26) on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace.

The year 2012 has been special for the United Kingdom, as London played host to the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. We were proud that the Games set many new records: sporting records and records for crowds, for television audiences and for unbridled spirit. Throughout our Olympic and Paralympic Games campaigning we hoped to ensure that the Games would leave a lasting legacy. We were proud and grateful to see parts of that legacy — specifically the International Inspiration sports legacy programme and General Assembly resolution 66/5 on the Olympic Truce — mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. We would like to share some additional information about those actions and their follow-up.

International Inspiration is London 2012's international sports legacy programme. At the Singapore bidding event in 2005, we vowed to work towards reaching out to young people around the world to connect them to the inspirational power of the Games, in order to inspire them to choose sport. So far, International Inspiration has enriched the lives of at least 11 million children in 20 countries around the world, through high-quality and inclusive physical education, sport and play and is on course to reach its target of 12 million children by 2014.

The United Kingdom is also proud to have had the opportunity to sponsor the 2011 resolution on the Olympic Truce. We were extremely grateful to all 193 Member States for their sponsorship. The United Kingdom's aspiration has been to mobilize the Olympic Truce resolution around the world. We hope to show that there are many aspects of the resolution that can be developed to promote peace.

With that in mind, we saw an opportunity to mobilize sport and the ideals of the Olympic Truce through the conflict prevention work of our diplomatic missions. Working in partnership with Member States, National Olympic Committees, parliamentarians and civil society, including faith groups and non-governmental organizations, we were able to deliver over 80 Olympic Truce activities on every continent. Examples include organizing a range of activities in collaboration with the Northern Uganda Youth Development Centre to celebrate the impact of peace on young people, including sporting events, a peace march and work within the community; and co-hosting a football tournament and clinic bringing people together from a diverse range of communities in the Philippines, in order to help bridge the gap between Christians and Muslims.

However, none of that would have been possible without the participation and cooperation of many different partners. We would like to give special thanks to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, for their support for the Olympic Truce work. The Secretary-General joined the British Foreign Secretary on the eve of the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Games, on 27 July, where both recognized the importance of the Olympic Truce.

The United Kingdom would also like to extend our warm wishes to future Games hosts. This month, British Government ministers visited both Moscow and Rio for high-level meetings as part of my country's Olympic handover and commitment to a long-term legacy. We welcome our agreements with Russia, Brazil and the International Olympic Committee to support promotion of the ideals of the Olympic Truce, and we remain ready and willing to continue that work into the future. We encourage all Member States to support and promote the ideals of the Olympic Truce internationally and domestically. Finally, we encourage all Member States to support Mr. Lemke's mandate and his work.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation highly commends the work of the United Nations in promoting international sport cooperation and contributing to enhancing mutual understanding among peoples and achieving understanding among civilizations. We are witnessing a difficult period in international relations in terms of globalization and dealing with the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, along with increasing social, intercultural and international conflicts and bouts of extremism.

Given those issues, the international community must, more than ever before, continue its efforts aimed at ensuring that sport — with its massive potential to promote unity — becomes a motor for comprehensive economic and social development and a means for achieving solidarity, tolerance and cultural diversity.

We believe that sport is a powerful tool for educating young people in mutual respect, tolerance, and rejection of xenophobia. Of particular importance today, it can protect young people from the influence of destructive forces that provoke negative phenomena, including terrorism.

The Russian Federation supports the idea that sport should develop according to its own rules and independently of the political situation. In particular, it should not serve as a pretext for intrigues or blackmail. In that regard, we welcome draft resolution A/67/L.26, submitted by Monaco and Tunisia, the chairs of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. In our view, the document refers to the efforts currently under way by Member States and international entities aimed at developing sport and enhancing its contribution in addressing many serious contemporary problems. The Russian Federation is pleased to have sponsored the draft resolution. The integration of sports ties into development efforts is an important priority in the Russian Federation's foreign policy and is constantly borne in mind by the Russian Government.

As is well known, the Russian city of Sochi has been selected as the site of the XXII Winter Olympic Games and the XI Winter Paralympic Games in 2014. We consider that selection to be a very positive assessment by the international community of the achievements of Russian sport and recognition of the Russian Federation's successful social, economic and political development efforts in recent years. We hope that the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi will go down in history as one of the most innovative ever.

Many of the preparation efforts are being carried out for the very first time, and whatever remains will become part of the legacy of the Olympic Games. One of the innovations is the close proximity of the sporting and infrastructure sites, which will facilitate movement and avoid transportation problems. We are building modern sporting installations in Sochi, especially for the 2014 Olympic Games, with the use of cutting-edge technology and construction aimed at protecting the environment.

We remain hopeful that the Sochi Olympic Games will set new standards for the hosting of major international sporting events and will help to introduce cutting-edge technology in construction and environmental protection and in creating an inclusive environment. We are convinced that the upcoming Olympic Games will foster further economic growth in the region and enable Sochi to become a world-class resort and business centre. That, in turn, will ensure the improvement of the living conditions of the people throughout the entire region. The Olympic and Paralympic Games will serve to further positive change in Russian society. More attention will be provided to protecting the environment and integrating people with disabilities into the active life of society.

Sport is a universal language of communication. Organized sport competitions bring together representatives from various countries, cultures and religions, which reveals the major unifying potential of sport as an effective channel for advancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, and we should take full advantage of that potential.

Mr. Ovsyanko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In October 2011, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 66/5, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal", sponsored by 193 States. In adopting that resolution, the Member States affirmed their commitment to the Olympic ideals, one of the most important of which is non-discrimination. As it is set out in the Olympic Charter, any form of religious or political discrimination is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.

The resolution called for reconciliation during the Olympic Games through the establishment of peaceful conditions and safe travel and participation for the athletes and others taking part in the Games. In practice, the experience of the most recent Olympiad showed that not every State fulfilled its proper obligations as laid down by the General Assembly and the Olympic Movement. It is regrettable to note the trend, which was vividly apparent during the Olympic Games in London, of exploiting international sports events for the purposes of putting pressure on sovereign States. Such acts not only undermine the spirit and letter of the Olympic Charter and General Assembly resolutions, they also devalue the principles of the Olympics and of sport as a whole.

It is also disturbing to see the trend that turned sport from being an expression of the great achievements and triumphant potential of the human body, will and mind to being a contest between sponsors and pharmacological giants. Partial judges, doping scandals and international Olympic officials who vote using double standards — all of that conspires to prevent sport's greatest achievements from working for the harmonious development of humankind and the creation of a peaceful society concerned with preserving human dignity. We are convinced that the combined efforts of the international community, when it demonstrates the necessary political will, are capable of putting an end to such negative trends.

We call for strengthening the role of the General Assembly and its leadership in the effort to develop the international Olympic Movement, combat such negative influences in sport and support initiatives to expand human development through sport. We believe that the time has come to create clear mechanisms for cooperation between the leadership of the United Nations, including the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, and the International Olympic Committee, with the goal of working together to observe the Olympic Truce among Member States and enhancing international cooperation.

Mr. Milubi (South Africa): It is an honour and privilege for South Africa to participate in this important debate on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, and we thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on sport for development and peace (A/67/282). We have noted the tremendous initiatives and national policies and strategies that some Member States have developed to enable sport to act as a catalyst for achieving many positive aspects of development.

This debate comes just a few months after the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. As the Secretary-General's report clearly states, the London Olympics, just as other sporting events have done,

> "brought together diverse communities affected by conflict to participate in sporting, cultural and educational activities to promote conflict prevention and peace" (*A/67/282, para. 6*).

We are also meeting on the eve of the African Cup of Nations soccer tournament, to be held in South Africa in January 2013. We hope it will be an opportunity to foster greater understanding and tolerance among different peoples in the spirit of nurturing peace.

It is worth mentioning that the legacy of the 2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup stretches beyond the obvious tangibles such as the stadiums, roads, airports, new equipment acquired for the police, emergency medical services and other Government services. In South Africa we have experienced how sport can serve as an inspiring force for unity and peaceful change. Sport also supports local economic development and the creation of jobs through the numerous income-generating activities linked to its practice. Before the beginning of the World Cup, President Jacob Zuma initiated the 1Goal campaign, with a view to advancing efforts towards achieving education for all.

South Africa views sport as an important part of education, and the campaign is part of a range of national activities aimed at achieving universal access to education. In recognition of that initiative and South Africa's prioritization of education, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon invited President Zuma to be one of the 10 inaugural Member State Champions for the Education First Initiative, whose purpose is to provide support to the Secretary-General in ensuring that the initiative enjoys global visibility and success.

As is clearly highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, South Africa's national sport and recreation plan emphasizes the health benefits of an active nation. Within the plan there is a special focus on youth, with the understanding that increased physical fitness can improve children's resistance to some diseases and that sport can help reduce the rate of adolescent pregnancies, which bring with them higher risks. The programmes proposed in the plan can also be used to reduce stigma and increase the social and economic integration of people living with HIV and AIDS.

In implementing our mass participation programme, Sport and Recreation South Africa, our experience has been that using sport to promote peace is extremely effective in programmes at the community level, since they directly involve those affected by conflict and social tension. Sport also offers a sense of normality, especially to young people, in times of instability. As an example, the programme Peace Players International used basketball to help with the positive development of the young people of KwaZulu-Natal. Trained coaches served as mentors, as well as educators, and used interactive games to reach children in discussing sensitive topics, such as HIV and AIDS prevention, gender roles and drugs and alcohol awareness.

The South African Department of Sport and Recreation and the German Development Bank have begun to roll out the South Africa Sport for Change programme. It showcases sport as a catalyst for change with great potential for youth development, using sport as a medium to create positive behaviour and attitudes and to reduce the factors conducive to the social ills that afflict young people and society. Sport is an important tool for bringing people around the world together to share their talents, regardless of race. It has the power to help get young people and others off the streets and at the same time to promote health, education, development and peace.

Sport has been recognized as a powerful tool through its contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General has said that sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the United Nations to improve the lives of people around the world; it builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace. In South Africa, sport has played a crucial role in the demise of the apartheid system and the creation of a new society since 1994.

In conclusion, South Africa supports the adoption of the draft resolution entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (A/67/L.26) by the General Assembly.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): It is indeed an honour for me speak on agenda item 12, "Sport for peace and development". Jamaica has, in spite of its relatively small size, enjoyed a long tradition of excellence in sport, which predates the 1948 Olympics and the Helsinki Games of 1952, when our sprint relay team struck gold. The magnificent world-class performance of our athletes in 2008, which was repeated at this year's London Olympics, truly showed the power of sport to unite the world and its potential for development. That significant achievement by our athletes takes on added significance as this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of our independence. It is with that history and tradition in mind that Jamaica decided to become, once again, a sponsor of the draft resolution on this agenda item (A/67/L.26). In that connection we have also become a member of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace.

In spite of the limited resources in our region and the relatively small population groups, there is an urgent need to develop strategies throughout the region to maximize resources and ensure the greatest positive impact among the population. Notwithstanding those circumstances, it is critical that sport become the focal point around which to stage our development programme. It has tremendous potential for all members of society, in particular the youth. It is also important to ensure that Government policies are aligned with that objective and that the potential for the development benefits of sports is duly recognized.

Sport has transcended the borders of the race tracks and indoor facilities. The reality is that it involves issues of health, tourism, social development and economic advancement, which are of common interest to us all. More importantly, sport provides a vehicle and a strategy, not only for Government but also for various other sectors of society, to systematically reduce poverty, build peace, reduce conflict and create wealth within communities.

Much has been done to institutionalize and formalize successful initiatives in Jamaica over the years. To that end, sport for development has become a national priority, as demonstrated by the urgency being given by the Government in finalizing the revised National Sports Policy. The National Sports Policy for Jamaica highlights the critical importance of sport in the achievement of Jamaica's development goals and national growth. Sport is viewed by the Government of Jamaica as a cross-cutting vehicle that will contribute to achieving national development and a healthy society. Sport is also considered a sustainable process that builds leadership and supports healthy behaviour and lifestyles as well as peaceful coexistence among communities.

Women continue, of course, to excel in most sporting events. They are integrally involved in the decision-making process relating to sport policies and are included in a number of executive boards and coaching staffs. At the community level, sport has been used as a major vehicle for mobilizing residents for various community development programmes, and, in Jamaica, sport has become an ingrained component of our daily lives.

Sport is included in the school curriculums in Jamaica, from the elementary level to the tertiary level. The University of the West Indies offers post-graduate programmes in sports medicine and other critical areas. The University of Technology now hosts the Caribbean School of Sport Sciences, which offers three bachelor of science electives, namely, coaching, sports management and athletic training, which focuses on physiology and physiotherapy. Our specialist institution, the G. C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sport, maintains a high standard of excellence in a wide-ranging set of programmes that seek to address the gaps that now exist in sport-related professions.

It is clear that in order to maximize the potential of sport being used as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, there is a need to redesign the image and understanding of the term "sport". It must address the means by which initiatives can be implemented through the provision of the necessary resources. That may be achieved through public- and private-sector partnership. In realization of the important role that sport plays in society, it is also imperative that its integrity be preserved. It is for that reason that the Jamaica Anti-Doping Commission promotes the development and maintenance of a dope-free environment. Finally, Jamaica fully endorses the recommendation to strengthen the work in each State in the area of sport as a vehicle for the promotion of education, development and peace and pledges to work collaboratively with other countries in that regard.

Mr. Berger (Germany): The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sport for development and peace: mainstreaming a versatile instrument" (A/67/282) underlines once again the important role that sport can play in the different areas of development and peacebuilding.

Sport activities bring together people from different regional, cultural and religious backgrounds and help to overcome cultural, linguistic and other barriers. Sport plays a valuable role in contributing to social cohesiveness and rapprochement between cultures and peoples. Moreover, sport programmes can foster social inclusion and help overcome discrimination against, and the marginalization of, women and disabled persons. Sport can also help to promote the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Sport programmes can support social integration, especially after periods of conflict, and such programmes can, for example, play a major role in the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers and other youths, an aspect that Germany follows closely as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We are grateful to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for bringing together and coordinating the various actors in the field of sport and development — multilateral actors such as the United Nations entities, national Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. The Office on Sport for Development and Peace plays a key role in connecting people, promoting peace and mutual understanding and driving the Millennium Development Goals through sport.

As a member of the Group of Friends for Sport for Development and Peace, we clearly see the added value of the Office's work. That is the reason why the German Government decided to support the Special Adviser and the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace. As we know, the Special Adviser covers sport in all its dimensions, from major world sport events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic games in London, to the grass-roots activities and non-governmental organizations in many developing countries. The Youth Leadership Camps developed by the Office are, in our view, a showcase of what such cooperation between the various actors in achieving the common goal can look like, and it shows how important the work of the Office and the Special Adviser is for the development of programmes as well as the coordination of the various actors. Germany is proud to be one of the hosts of the Youth Leadership Camps in 2012.

We have also been, as I said, one of the main supporters of the Office's activities since 2008, and our clear intention is to continue with our support in the future. However, the predictability of funding is of utmost importance, and we would therefore like to take the opportunity of this debate to express our full support for Mr. Lemke's approach, which he outlined in the main lines of action in the report, in order to broaden financial support for his Office. I think it is very important that many Member States, as we have seen in today's debate, are very much interested in this topic and support sport. They also support the Office and the work of the Special Adviser.

In May 2013 in Berlin Germany will organize a World Sport Minister Conference, where we would like to welcome all Member States. I would like to encourage Member States that share the same objectives as the Office for Sport for Development and Peace to consider becoming a member of the Group of Friends. I am convinced that a large and active group can contribute significantly to achieving our common goals.

Let me finish by thanking the co-facilitators, Monaco and Tunisia, for preparing the draft resolution we will adopt today.

Mrs. Davidovich (Israel): The State of Israel strongly supports promoting sport to advance education, health, development and peace, and we are a proud sponsor of the draft resolution to be adopted today. My delegation appreciates the report of the Secretary-General on this important subject (A/67/282) and welcomes the new Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace proposed therein.

Throughout history, sport has played a vital role in the lives of people around the world. Sport acts as a platform for engaging youth, women and people with disabilities, promoting dialogue and coexistence and fostering development. Sport promotes universal values such as honour, teamwork and tolerance. It helps us transcend our differences and reminds us of our commonalities.

Sport has also been a powerful tool for progress and development. It has played an important role in advancing the Millennium Development Goals, including the promotion of gender equality. Sport fosters empowerment and self-esteem; it provides women with a chance to come together, learn new skills and develop leadership abilities. Israel welcomes the Thematic Working Group on Sport and Gender, of the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, which highlights best practices and contributes to advancing gender equality around the world.

Israel deeply recognizes the value of sport. In 2009, the Israeli Government created the Culture and Sports Ministry in order to better harness the benefits of sport for Israeli society. In 2011, Israel, together with the Government of Germany, hosted the first international conference on "Sport as a mediator between Cultures", with the support of UNESCO and other organizing partners, including Football for Peace International. The United Nations Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, attended, as did ministers, academics, and representatives of civil society and the private sector from around the world. It was an important platform to develop an understanding of how sport can contribute to education, social development, peacebuilding and cross-culture reconciliation. It was also an important opportunity to bring and devise strategies for using sport in those fields.

The Sports Authority within the Culture and Sports Ministry operates multicultural sport activities in line with the Ministry's vision, which regards sport as an important cultural stimulus that minimizes differences while stressing commonalties. In that spirit, the Office regularly organizes activities that bring together Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians. Two successful programmes are Football 4 Peace and Ultimate Peace Frisbee.

Israeli civil society also prides itself on its sport-for-peace accomplishments. The Twinned Peace Sport Schools programme at the Peres Center for Peace in Tel Aviv is the longest-running coexistence sport project in the Middle East. Every year, it hosts sports leagues for nearly 2,000 children from twinned communities across Israel and the Palestinian Authority to foster coexistence and mutual respect.

The Israeli non-governmental organization Mifalot oversees more than 300 programmes that use football to foster peace and tolerance across our region. Mifalot's annual sporting event brings together 20,000 youths from Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan as part of an effort to change perceptions and stereotypes. On the heels of its remarkable success in Israel, the programme has expanded to Cameroon, Rwanda, Haiti and many other countries.

In Israel, Mifalot also promotes gender equality in minority communities. For example, in Bedouin villages in southern Israel, initiatives aimed at empowering young girls have enjoyed significant success. Maryam Abu-Ghanem, a resident of Tel Sheva, became Israel's first female Bedouin sports coach this year.

Finally, on behalf of my country, I would like to thank the Special Adviser on Sport, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for his continuing dedication to the noble ideal of using sport to promote tolerance and mutual understanding. Israel continues to value the importance of sport in promoting awareness, mutual understanding and a culture of peace. As our President, Shimon Peres, once said, "You do not wait for peace in order to use sport for peace; you can use sport to achieve peace".

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 12.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.26, entitled "Sports as a means to promote education, health, development and peace".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Argentina, the Bahamas, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, Eritrea, Granada, Guinea, Haiti, Jamaica, Japan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mongolia, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt A/67/L.26?

Draft resolution A/67/L.26 was adopted (resolution 67/17).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Notes by the Secretary-General (A/67/82 and A/67/270)

(b) Draft resolution (A/67/L.25)

Agenda items 113 and 119

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

(a) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/201 and A/67/257)

(b) Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/373)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.25.

Mr. Badral (Mongolia): It is my honour to present to the General Assembly draft resolution A/67/L.25, entitled "Education for Democracy". The list of sponsors is long, but let me quickly read out all of them. Their names are worthy of being announced loudly and proudly, as if we were still at the unforgettable and grandiose opening of the outstanding Olympic Games in Beijing and London. They are Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States of America, Uruguay and, of course, my own country, Mongolia.

Mongolia extends its sincere thanks to all the sponsors for their unwavering support. I am also grateful to China, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, South Africa, Venezuela and other Member States for their strong interest, active participation and substantive contributions to disseminating and improving the draft during consultations.

As the former Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and as the current Chair of the Community of Democracies, Mongolia has made education for democracy the top priority during its chairmanship. In line with that priority, we have submitted the draft resolution on the subject and conducted numerous informal consultations with Member Governments in order to seek their views and improve the text so that it could become a consensus resolution. All delegations that took part in those consultations expressed their support.

The text before us is not ideal, and I know that the sponsors and other participating countries are not fully satisfied. Nevertheless, a flexible reading of the current text should reveal that all concepts and interpretations with respect to education for democracy that Members wanted to include from their perspective are present, although some explicit language may be missing. We therefore consider that the text is balanced and meets the basic needs of all countries. We have substantially scaled back our own initial ambitions in order to accommodate the interests of all.

The importance of the subject under consideration is well known. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has noted, developing a culture of democracy and fostering global citizenship are becoming part of the most pressing priorities of the international community. All that embraces education for democracy. The sponsors strongly believe that the main outcome of the draft resolution will be to launch a focused discussion on how to help educate our people in the culture of peace and democracy and a culture of tolerance of and respect for different civilizations and religions, as well as in upholding the values of freedom and human rights. The draft resolution, once adopted, will contribute to fostering global citizenship, with all Members equally playing a proactive role and globally sharing their own national best practices in education for democracy through a common platform.

On behalf of the sponsors, I ask the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Beviglia Zampetti (European Union): I will address the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, and then I will add a few words on the note by the Secretary-General in A/67/373.

With regard to the Millennium Summit outcome, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, align themselves with this declaration.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report entitled "Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015" (A/67/257) and are grateful for the opportunity to exchange views on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We believe that our first priority must be to increase the impact of our development cooperation in order to make as much progress as possible on the MDGs before 2015. There has been encouraging progress. However, it has varied significantly both among MDG targets and among regions. With developing countries in the lead, we must continue our common efforts towards that end, focusing on the MDGs that are the most off-track and the most vulnerable.

The MDGs are central to EU development efforts. The €1 billion EU MDG Initiative, designed specifically to increase impact and boost tangible progress on the most off-track MDG targets, has now been implemented. The new EU Agenda for Change development framework aims to ensure the most effective and long-lasting impact by concentrating our actions where they bring added value and can be a catalyst for more sustainable and inclusive growth in developing countries.

Secondly, looking beyond 2015, we recognize the power that the MDG framework has had in catalysing worldwide action on development. We should build on that achievement. A solid assessment of the current MDGs needs to be undertaken in view of the September 2013 special event to follow up on efforts made towards achieving the MDGs.

We believe that the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the set of related United Nations documents, as well as the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), provide a comprehensive and ambitious foundation for the post-2015 period. The post-2015 development agenda could build on and improve the MDG framework, modernizing it and strengthening weak or missing issues.

In that context, without diverting efforts from the achievement of the MDGs, we would like to stress the importance of developing SDGs — sustainable development goals — that are coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, with a view to an overarching framework for the post-2015 period. They need to address the key global challenges in the years to come and fully encompass the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and synergistic way. They should be linked to possible concrete targets and indicators and be universal and applicable to all countries, while allowing for differentiated approaches among countries. We also consider it very important that the upcoming process to design the sustainable development goals be inclusive, with the full contribution and engagement of all relevant stakeholders.

Improving the current framework while keeping it simple will be our common challenge. I think that we can all agree that goals are useful only if limited in number, action-oriented and easily communicable, and if they can operationalize agreed principles and shared objectives on the ground.

Let me close my statement by saying that the European Union and its member States look forward to continued and constructive discussions and dialogue with all partners in the run-up to September 2013.

I would also like to say a few words with regard to the note by the Secretary-General in A/67/373. The EU and its member States thank the Secretary-General for the note, which transmits the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) on options for strengthening and facilitating multisectoral action for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases through effective partnership.

We believe that, before being considered in the General Assembly plenary in New York, those options should be discussed further in Geneva in the context of the development of the WHO global action plan on non-communicable diseases. In addition, that is where the relevant public-health expertise resides.

The Director-General's report presents six necessary functions relating to collaboration and partnerships. However, rather than an analysis of them, we are presented with a number of questions that have a wider scope. Furthermore, those functions seem to be based on a vertical, disease- or treatment-based approach. We think that more emphasis should be put on health determinants and preventive public policy measures, which can be developed in consultation with targeted stakeholders, including civil society. We also wish to stress the need for a broader scope of research for public health interventions, policies and capacities — not only research and development efforts for specific products.

However, we appreciate that the report addresses the necessity of coordination. We could not agree more. We would like to see the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases taking a more strategic, systemic and global approach, driven by policies across all relevant sectors, under WHO leadership and guidance and as articulated through the global action plan to be adopted at the World Health Assembly in May next year.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the role of the WHO as the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. The challenges posed by non-communicable diseases are complex and multifaceted. The key is to strengthen both international and multi-stakeholder collaboration and to ensure a coordinated, system-wide response through a health-in-all-policies approach. We believe that that response should be delivered within the existing resources, and we consider that WHO is uniquely placed to provide leadership on that critical challenge for global health and development.

Mr. Goddard (Barbados): On behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I wish to deliver this statement on agenda item 113, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit".

At the outset, the Caribbean Community expresses its appreciation for the note by the Secretary-General (A/67/373), which transmitted, in a timely manner, the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization on options for strengthening and facilitating multisectoral action for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases through effective partnership. While the Caribbean Community notes that the report does not emphasize the importance of regional coordination mechanisms and the efforts to address the fundamental challenges posed by non-communicable diseases (NCDs), we are of the view that the report is a good analysis of the experiences of using multisectoral mechanisms to address other health issues.

The Caribbean Community strongly agrees that coordinating mechanisms are important at all levels for the effective implementation of national, regional and global multisectoral plans to address NCDs. In our subregion, for example, thus far two States have established national commissions and another has developed a partners forum with a view to addressing the incidence and prevalence of those diseases.

CARICOM also avails itself of this opportunity to commend the World Health Organization (WHO) on the creation of the Global Non-communicable Disease Network, NCDnet. It recognizes that that mechanism is an excellent starting point for bringing together actors to raise awareness about, begin action towards and assist the implementation of the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases.

With particular reference to the five options put forward in the report, the Caribbean Community is especially supportive of option 3, which relates to forming a coordinated network. We believe that that option is both the most appropriate and the most feasible in the short term, given the scope, scale and, most important, the urgency of the rising prevalence of NCDs. The option presents many features necessary for a successful partnership to promote multisectoral approaches to addressing the issue of NCDs.

In that regard, CARICOM supports the key role that the WHO could and should play in such a global partnership as the technical lead on health. We also hold the view, however, that the technology of partnership requires resources, innovation and creativity in order to facilitate its effective functioning. Therefore, both resources and technical assistance would be required to ensure the effectiveness and desired impact of any partnership. Should adequate resources become available to support the required partnership, the Caribbean Community could also consider a centralized and formalized partnership, as presented as option 5 in the aforementioned report.

The Caribbean Community also wishes to commend the WHO for the timely development of the second global action plan, for 2013 to 2020, as it will serve, along with the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (resolution 66/2, annex), as the principal multisectoral compass for the global coordinating mechanism. We also applaud the WHO for identifying and promoting the "25 by 25" target — to reduce non-communicable diseases by 25 per cent by 2025 — and for the extensive process completed to develop a global monitoring framework. The Caribbean Community looks forward to the presentation of the elements of that framework to the General Assembly in the not-too-distant future.

The Caribbean Community agrees that there is a need for multisectoral plans and policies, to be developed and implemented at the national level, and for a partnership to assist in that regard. We also share the view that they should be tailored in keeping with national settings as well as with political, technical and operational needs. At the same time, those efforts are to be complemented by a global partnership that will support and enhance the development and implementation of such policies nationally, regionally and globally.

The Caribbean Community also wishes to recall the General Assembly's request, in the previously mentioned Political Declaration, for a report to be submitted at its sixty-eighth session, in preparation for a comprehensive review and assessment in 2014 of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. In that connection, CARICOM expresses its preference to receive the report during the sixty-eighth session, at the end of December 2013, in order to ensure that it contains the most current information and that there is sufficient time for its consideration and so that it can contribute to preparations for the comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of NCDs.

We are aware that further discussions are required on this issue. CARICOM is therefore of the view that all Member States should have the opportunity to participate in discussions to determine the scope of, and further details related to, the partnership. Within this context, however, should there be overwhelming support for option 3, the Caribbean Community would encourage international solidarity with respect to obtaining the initial resources necessary for the commencement of the process by the WHO, in collaboration with other relevant United Nations agencies.

As we conclude, the Caribbean Community urges delegations to recall that 60 per cent of deaths worldwide — 80 per cent of which are in developing countries — are due to non-communicable diseases. The percentage of deaths due to NCDs is also expected to increase in some parts of the world in the near future. NCDs can therefore be seen as a critical challenge to development and to health in general. Consequently, the Caribbean Community supports the inclusion of NCDs as one of the issues to be discussed in relation to the post-2015 development agenda in the context of global health challenges.

Ms. Saban (United States of America): We realize that there are a number of important items being discussed today. Our comments will pertain only to agenda item 113 and the report of the World Health Organization Director-General on non-communicable diseases, transmitted in the note by the Secretary-General (A/67/373).

The United States strongly believes that multisectoral action is critical to both preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and managing their long-term consequences. The United States is currently implementing its first multisectoral national prevention strategy. The National Prevention Council, led by our Surgeon General, works across the United States Government and with private and public partners to actively engage all sectors and levels of society in improving the health and well-being of our communities.

The High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases and associated meetings were important opportunities for Member States to consider best practices for multisectoral action and to convene and collaborate with civil society and the private sector. Energy and momentum to follow through on the spirit of the Political Declaration of that meeting (resolution 66/2, annex) and to deliver on its major outcomes have been sustained through the engagement of the many stakeholders.

The Political Declaration requested that the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), develop options to strengthen and facilitate multisectoral action. The United States welcomes the report's exploration of those options, appropriately focused on national-level action and the leadership role of Governments in partnerships with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

Country-level implementation of evidence-based, cost-effective interventions will be central to reducing premature deaths from NCDs by 25 per cent by 2025, in concert with other voluntary global targets. To reach those targets, there is a need for greater dissemination among Member States of guidelines, best practices and lessons learned on practical, effective, sustainable and widely applicable approaches to multisectoral action at the national level. At all levels, partnerships should serve to foster an environment conducive to public health and to healthy choices.

The United States fully endorses the leadership role of the WHO, as the primary specialized United Nations agency on health, in facilitating coordinated action among United Nations agencies, development banks and other regional or international organizations. The United States notes the various options for global collaboration to promote and accelerate country action. We agree with the report's statement that a single, stand-alone partnership would not be sufficient to cover the scope and scale of NCDs. Rather, multiple innovative partnerships, collaborations and coordinated independent efforts are needed to address diverse aspects of the challenge and engage the landscape of actors inside and outside the health sector. Additionally, flexible options that allow for the evolution of the global response to NCDs should be pursued.

Along with the recently finalized global monitoring framework, the updated WHO Global Action Plan on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2013-2020, to be adopted at the World Health Assembly in May 2013, is expected to provide guidance on key activities and to help elaborate how the global community can put into motion the multisectoral approaches highlighted by the Political Declaration. The WHO Action Plan will increase the impact and efficacy of existing global partnerships, alliances and results-oriented collaborative arrangements. More information is needed on the proposal for an inter-agency task force on NCDs, which would report to the Economic and Social Council, including the proposed terms of reference, function, role and responsibilities, and associated costs. We would again like to stress our support for WHO as the overall lead on NCDs, and would like to understand how the work of that inter-agency group would be harmonized under the auspices of WHO leadership. Again, the United States is committed to multisectoral action as an integral part of the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and we appreciate the report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Versegi (Australia): Australia is committed to advancing the work on all agenda items discussed here this morning, and we thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports and notes on those items. As the Secretary-General's report in document A/67/257 clearly emphasizes, a comprehensive and coherent development effort is needed if we are make further progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Australia understands that aid is an important part of that effort, but we also know that policies to promote open trade and market access for developing countries, investment and private-sector growth, as well as opportunities for the sharing of ideas and experience through South-South and triangular cooperation, also play a vital role in helping to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable growth.

As a co-chair of the MDG Advocacy Group and a champion of the Secretary-General's Education First initiative, Australia's Prime Minister is seized of the importance of ensuring continued international attention to the achievement of the current set of goals. As an international community, we cannot afford to take our eyes off that unfinished work while we also give attention to the development agenda that will follow.

As we said during the debate a year ago (see A/66/PV.72), we must take the knowledge gained from the MDG successes in many countries and apply those lessons to support the countries and communities that still face a long and difficult road ahead in achieving the targets. Let us not lose sight of the fact that we have come a long way and made considerable progress at the global level on several of the MDGs, but let us learn from that progress and harness the knowledge for the benefit of all.

For example, important gains in primary school enrolments and improvements in the enrolment of girls are to be celebrated, but we still have more to do to improve enrolments and focus on the quality of education to ensure that children are actually learning. We commend the Secretary-General's Education First initiative for putting a clear focus on the need to put every child into school and to ensure that they are able to complete their education with strong learning outcomes. We must now focus on effectively implementing that initiative effectively.

Commitments on HIV prevention and treatment, as well as on malaria, have yielded impressive results. But as important as those gains are, we cannot afford to be complacent on the health MDGs.

As the Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities highlighted during his visit to Australia earlier this week, promoting women's and girls' rights and empowerment, including through access to family planning, remains central to achieving the MDGs.

As we prepare to mark World AIDS Day, we are reminded of the need to do more to reach the targets of zero new infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination by 2015. And we need to keep working to reduce the number of malaria cases, including by addressing the emergence of drug-resistant malaria in the Mekong region. That is why Australia recently convened a major international conference on malaria in Sydney.

The MDGs provide the international community with a clear and vital development framework for the next three years. We urge Member States, the United Nations and international organizations, regional organizations, civil society and the private sector to work together to address inequalities and inequities in access to services and development opportunities. We must do more to accelerate progress on the MDGs in conflict-affected and fragile States, and we must increase and sustain a focus on the peacebuilding, security and development needs of those countries.

And now, in the development of the post-2015 development agenda, we must do more to recognize the needs of women, girls and persons with disabilities. We would highlight the important work of UN-Women in strengthening the role of the United Nations in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and the role of women in peace and security. We look forward to continuing our close engagement with UN-Women over the coming year, including as a member of the Executive Board.

Australia is fully committed to making a strong contribution to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, but we will not deviate from our firm resolve to help accelerate efforts towards attaining the current MDGs over the next three years. We look forward to the special event in 2013, which will be a key opportunity for the international community to assess progress on the MDGs and to commit to strategies and actions that will help in the final push to 2015.

We appreciate the ideas provided by the Secretary-General on the way forward with the post-2015 development agenda and we commend the steps already underway to ensure a strong consultative process with a wide range of stakeholders. It will be important for the process towards the development of the post-2015 agenda to be clear and coherent, and we welcome steps to ensure that the relevant processes converge onto a common track.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I wish to thank President Vuk Jeremić for convening this joint debate on the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields and to the Millennium Summit, as well as on United Nations reform. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for submitting all his reports and notes, which provide very useful inputs for our debate.

The hard-won progress achieved in some of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is heartening, especially if we consider the difficulties created by the financial and economic crisis. The decline in the number of people living in extreme poverty, the improvement in access to drinking water and in conditions for those living in slums, along with the advances in gender equality and the empowerment of women, should encourage us to move quickly and more decisively towards the achievement of all the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals in the final stretch to 2015.

As a Member State champion of the Secretary-General's Global Education initiative, we believe that by raising education to the highest level on the international agenda we will be contributing to progress in virtually all other items and challenges we face in the twenty-first century. Universal access to quality education is key if we are to overcome poverty and inequality.

The international community has the responsibility to make good on its commitments. Although we recognize the efforts made by some donor countries to meet their official development assistance (ODA) commitments, we note with concern that current overall ODA levels are well below half of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income of developed countries.

We must take concrete steps to revamp the development-oriented Doha Round of trade negotiations and to promote the transfer of technology and the sharing of good practices, knowledge and experiences to support national capacity-building, especially for those that are lagging behind. We must also ensure access to affordable, effective, safe and quality medicine, including through the full use of the flexibilities of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), as recognized in the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

In facing the dire consequences of the current crisis and struggling to make progress on our collective development goals, developing countries need policy space and flexibility to make use of macroeconomic tools, especially countercyclical fiscal policies and other stimulus measures. It is fundamental that we focus our economic recovery efforts on the promotion of a job-centred, socially inclusive economic model. The United Nations system must give particular attention to supporting the Global Jobs Pact and to the creation and strengthening of social protection floors, as called for in this year's Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council.

Based on our national experience and as indicated in report A/67/257, we believe that universal health systems can play an important role as an effective social protection policy by ensuring access to health services and medicine and reducing economic and social inequalities.

Although limited in scope, the MDG framework represents a successful experience in mobilizing resources and focusing the international community's attention on a number of key areas for human development. It has also helped to strengthen the relevant role of the United Nations as a priority partner in development cooperation.

The unequivocal message from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is that we must incorporate and place the sustainability paradigm at the centre of our analysis when looking at the development agenda for the twenty-first century. Economic development, social inclusion and the rational use and conservation of natural resources have to be considered on an equal footing and cannot be disassociated from each other.

The goals to be considered in the negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda must build on and be improved and enriched by the current MDGs. They should also aim at consolidating the achievements made under the MDGs by broadening the scope of the implementation to integrate the three pillars, with a view to fostering sustainable development.

An inclusive, open and transparent Member State-driven process of consultations must be held in order to define which goals will be included in the post-2015 agenda, how progress will be measured and what the means of implementation will be. We are following with interest the initiatives of the Secretary-General to launch preparations for the process of defining the post-2015 agenda, especially the work of the task force led by the Department of Economic Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, and the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons.

We are of the view that all those initiatives must converge in the intergovernmental process, so as to allow for the adoption of a legitimate development agenda that embraces different views and priorities, but represents shared expectations and common aspirations. We need tools that provide a sense of direction to our common efforts while preserving the necessary flexibility for each country to pursue its own development path. Building on the success of the MDGs, we also believe that they can provide guidance to all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations system.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): In contributing to the join debate, the delegation of Indonesia wishes to particularly focus on agenda item 113, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit". We also thank the Secretary-General for the reports before us.

The international community is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, to addressing existing obstacles, gaps and challenges, and to taking advantage of opportunities. Indonesia is fully committed to meeting all its MDG targets. Indonesia recognizes that a concerted national effort is critical to ensuring the attainment of the MDG targets at the national and global levels.

The MDGs framework, however, has been viewed as having certain constraints, including being too focused on human development while not giving adequate attention to the need to generate general economic growth and development. Today, it is increasingly recognized that countries that have not experienced sustained or inclusive growth will have difficulties in meeting their poverty reduction targets and the other MDGs by 2015.

It is in this context that resolution 65/10 stressed that the promotion of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth is necessary for accelerating progress towards achieving the MDGs, as well as promoting sustainable development. Greater emphasis on growth will help to create more jobs and provide social protection aimed at protecting and empowering people and communities, the most vulnerable groups in particular.

The world will not stop in 2015, however. We must undertake further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Incorporating the development concept of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and development as an integral part of a post-2015 development framework could greatly contribute to achieving not only existing development goals, but also new goals that could be set post-2015.

With regard to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), as projected by the World Health Organization, NCD-related deaths will increase by 17 per cent over the next decade. Three in five deaths in South-East Asia are caused by NCDs. An estimated 8 million people die of NCDs each year in the region, accounting for 22 per cent of global deaths caused by those diseases.

Indonesia is grappling with the double threat of communicable and non-communicable diseases. We have given priority to minimizing the common risk factors: tobacco use, alcohol abuse, an unhealthy diet and physical inactivity. We established in 2006 a special unit in the Ministry of Health with the task of strengthening the legal framework and implementing our policy on NCDs. Indonesia also is committed to implementing the 2008-2013 Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases.

The scale and virulence of non-communicable diseases require unprecedented political commitment at the highest political levels to address that global issue. That commitment must therefore be incorporated into the global agenda of the international community. The convening of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases in September last year and the adoption of the Political Declaration on NCDs (resolution 66/2, annex) highlighted that commitment. The mobilization of resources and the building of a genuine global partnership with civil society, private sectors, philanthropies and even influential individuals are therefore essential. We also call on the international community to include progress in the fight against NCDs as a component of the post-2015 development agenda.

Turning to women's issues, Indonesia commends the efforts that UN-Women has made in Indonesia to date. Indonesia would like to reiterate its commitment to and support for the work of UN-Women, including its strategic plan 2011-2013. We urge UN-Women to continue providing appropriate and strategic support to middle-income countries, which, despite their recent economic achievements, still face challenges in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.

As a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Indonesia will continue its core contributions. At the same time, efforts to identify a sustainable predictable and innovative financing path for the entity are vital for the long term. We look forward to the result of the UN-Women's comprehensive resource mobilization strategy to deepen and broaden the donor base. We urge UN-Women to continue to improve its role and contribution at the country level by developing its tool for the comprehensive assessment of the overall capacity of United Nations country teams.

Indonesia appreciates and supports UN-Women's new regional architecture initiative which is a reflection of the entity's efforts aimed at carrying out its mandates and at making further progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. We are of the view that any proposal on regional architecture should include an impact assessment to help strengthen operational activities at the regional and country levels.

Finally, Indonesia emphasizes the importance of a strong oversight and monitoring mechanism to sustain the coordination of and normative and operational linkages among all levels in order to strengthen unity within UN-Women.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General for his informative report on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and recommendations for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 (A/67/257).

The report stresses support for gradual and comprehensive economic growth and job creation. The experience of recent years shows that the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis can be overcome at the lowest cost by those countries that implement development strategies aimed at ensuring social equality, full and productive employment, and dignified work for all. Unemployment, as is rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, often becomes a key factor in political instability and armed conflict. We are convinced that the task of job creation and ensuring decent work environments should be one of the central elements of the global social and economic agenda for post-2015.

Russia has significant practical experience in developing social and employment institutions. Much has been done in such areas as improving labour laws, regulating the labour market, reforming pension systems, and professional training and retraining, particularly for vulnerable population groups. We are ready to share our best practices with the international community, as they have clearly proven their effectiveness. On 11 and 12 December, upon the initiative of President Putin, an international high-level conference on the issue of decent work will be held in Moscow. We are convinced that this important event will give a powerful impulse to coordinating multilateral efforts to implement the International Labour Organization's concepts of decent work and sustainable development based on wide-ranging and equitable economic growth.

Russia ascribes particular importance to the global efforts to combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs). A key role in advancing international dialogue in that area was played by the first global ministerial conference on healthy lifestyles and non-communicable disease control held in Moscow, the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, and the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of NCDs. We hope that there will be an agreement within WHO this year on common obligations on non-communicable diseases and that a new plan of action in that area will be drawn up for the 2014-2020 period.

Russia continues to step up its participation in global health. Our contribution to the WHO non-communicable diseases project for 2012-2013 exceeds $7 million. We plan to contribute more than $36 million to programmes to help developing countries to combat non-communicable diseases. Our future plans include the opening in our country of a local WHO office on non-communicable diseases. We believe that the Russian national system being set up to monitor those diseases and related risk factors will in time become part of the global information system under WHO auspices.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to pay consistent attention to the issue of reforming the management mechanisms of the United Nations in order to increase their effectiveness. At the same time, we note that reform is not an end in itself. Its implementation should be based on close consultation with Member States and meet their interests and those of the United Nations as a universal Organization.

We are concerned to note the conclusions of the Board of Auditors that a number of substantive management reforms currently being implemented suffer from major shortcomings. I would refer to the introduction of the enterprise resource planning project (Umoja), the transition to the International Public

Sector Accounting Standards, the global field support strategy and human resource reform. All of those projects suffer from the absence of a well-designed, long-term strategy, a vision of the final outcome and a deficit of any internal oversight.

As we know, the Secretariat is preparing a series of other proposals for significant internal reforms. We are ready to consider proposals that we receive, in particular those that fully take into account the views and priorities of Member States on management processes at the United Nations, as well as the need not to allow any interruption in its effective work.

Mr. Waheed (Maldives): The Republic of Maldives gives sincere thanks for the work of the Secretariat and to the Secretary-General for his reports on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit (A/67/257) and on strengthening the institutional arrangements for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women (A/67/201).

Maldives believes that the United Nations holds an unquestionable and unique position in the multilateral system. There is no doubt that the world has in recent years entered a new era, with new challenges facing the global community. Economic instability, climate change, food and nutrition security are all issues that have gained a new-found prominence in today's world.

In the light of our growing interdependence, a collective and holistic approach is required and, whether the solution is political or socioeconomic, isolationism is no longer an option. Finding multilateral solutions to the aforementioned emerging challenges lies at the heart of global governance. The multilateral system should be inclusive, transparent and effective. It must have the capacity to respond and remain relevant and responsive to emerging challenges.

Maldives believes that governance institutions should tackle global economic imbalances, promote sustained, inclusive and equitable growth, advance multilateral trade agreements, enhance food and energy security, provide social protection for the poor and the vulnerable, and strengthen mechanisms aimed at reducing inequalities. Effective global governance is essential for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the formulation and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Maldives notes with concern the infrastructure of global governance. Both decentralization and inequity remain present within its membership and voting patterns. Yet we have to understand that global governance goes beyond the United Nations to other institutions and agencies, including the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

My delegation believes that, in addition to regional groups, a particular emphasis needs to be given to non-State actors that have been ever-present in development and policy dialogues. The global governance system should be more capable of dealing with interconnected socioeconomic challenges, more coherent and coordinated, and supported by institutions that are representative, inclusive and effective.

In view of the principle of common but differentiated treatment, Maldives believes that the multilateral framework should capture and respond to specific regional needs and demands, especially those of small vulnerable States. Smaller and poorer countries are often the most affected by global rules, yet we have the least amount of say in their design. Regional arrangements can help to provide better representation for smaller and least developed countries, promoting greater ownership and engagement with global policy.

Maldives recognizes the universality of the United Nations and reaffirms its support and commitment to the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Assembly. In this regard, Maldives notes with satisfaction the continuing interaction of the General Assembly with international, regional and subregional forums, including groups dealing with global matters, to achieve and promote broader consensus. It is our hope that these interactions will ultimately lead to identifying and addressing the present deficiencies in global governance. It is our hope that the leadership of the United Nations shall be able to bring inclusive and effective responses to matters of global concern. It is through strengthened global governance that our visions for the future, including for the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 process, will be realized.

As a nation, Maldives has had much success in meeting the Millennium Development Goal targets, having eradicated extreme poverty, achieved universal primary education, reduced child mortality and fought deadly diseases. We are now pioneering aggressive campaigns for equity, sustainability and development. It is with these existing frameworks that Maldives looks to the future — to both the framing and the eventual implementation of the sustainable development goals.

As a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women for the upcoming term, Maldives looks forward to more efficient gender mainstreaming across United Nations entities. We also want to stress the importance of addressing women's underrepresentation in governance structures and political participation. Maldives believes that the Entity's presence in the field and coordination with Member States must be given priority, and that capacity and operations in the field must be increased to meet the ever-prevalent demand.

Although the global community is faced with an era of new challenges, the United Nations has cultivated a global atmosphere for enhanced development, security and human rights, and these have coalesced into tangible results for more of the world's population than ever before. Democracy and good governance are spreading. Commitments to reducing conflict, poverty, discrimination, economic isolation and economic vulnerability endure in the psyche of the larger community of nations.

Yet the strides that have been made to bring forward the development situations of many countries cannot be allowed to be reversed. Though we face one of the worst financial crises of our time, principles of equitable globalization, with economic growth and sustained legal empowerment for vulnerable populations, including the poor, should be promoted while ensuring that there is greater coherence in achieving different but interrelated goals. Gone are the days when we could consider economic development as separate from social development, and gone are the days when national policies could be developed outside of global prerogatives.

With the restructuring of our global governance systems through a focus on sustained and equitable betterment, we shall overcome the challenges we face today and those we will face in the future. Though the road is long, this is a journey worth making, and the principles of betterment and equity will be fructified on the tree of our common destiny.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Second Committee. Members will recall that, at its second plenary meeting, on 21 September, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Second Committee should complete its work by Friday, 30 November. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work to Thursday, 13 December, which would facilitate reaching consensus on the draft resolutions pending before the Committee. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Thursday, 13 December?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.43

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

43rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 28 November 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 14, 113 and 119 *(continued)*

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Notes by the Secretary-General (A/67/82 and A/67/270)

(b) Draft resolution (A/67/L.25)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

(a) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/201 and A/67/257)

(b) Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/373)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Mr. Och (Mongolia): First of all, I wish to extend my delegation's great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his annual report (A/67/257) entitled "Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals". I believe that our discussions, based on a thorough and comprehensive review and assessment of what has been achieved and which goals remain out of reach, will provoke new ideas on how we can scale up our efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implementing other outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

As we can see from the report, the international community should undertake targeted and scaled-up action to alleviate the burden of those in need and should promptly implement all commitments under the global partnership for development in order to support national efforts, in particular commitments in the areas of aid, trade, debt relief and access to new technologies. According to the Secretary-General's report, that means that official development assistance flows will have to be more than doubled in order to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent.

We need to be innovative and find ways to do more with limited resources. In our efforts to accelerate progress towards the MDGs, we need to take into account the results of surveys and studies undertaken by various United Nations agencies and research centres. In that connection, according to a report launched this year by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities — *State of World Population 2012* — ensuring the availability of voluntary family planning to everyone in developing countries would reduce the costs for maternal and newborn health care by $11.3 billion annually. The report also emphasizes that family planning is more than merely an economic issue and is connected to human rights and access to education. It also estimates that 3 million fewer babies would die in their first year of life if 120 million more women had access to family planning.

My delegation also wishes to express its gratitude to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the report contained in document A/67/373, which was prepared and submitted for consideration

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under the agenda item entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit". That report states that non-communicable diseases threaten the population and fiscal health of all nations, and that greater action in all countries and by all stakeholders therefore remains imperative. The outcome document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (A/CONF.216/16), also acknowledges that the global burden of non-communicable diseases constitutes one of the major challenges for development today.

It is obvious that the primary role in, and responsibility for, responding to the challenge of non-communicable diseases resides with national Governments. But the complexity of the challenges posed by such diseases calls for actions of a multisectoral nature and for multi-stakeholder partnerships beyond Governments. My delegation therefore believes that the five models for global partnerships against non-communicable diseases proposed in the report should be given due consideration.

The report provides interesting examples of cross-sectoral Government engagement to reduce the risk factors for non-communicable diseases, which are tobacco use, physical inactivity, alcohol abuse and an unhealthy diet. According to the report, a survey conducted by WHO in 2010 found that 86 per cent of countries have some form of partnerships or collaborations for implementing key activities. Eighty-three per cent of countries address tobacco use, 81 per cent address diabetes, 77 per cent address unhealthy diet, 77 per cent address cancer and 75 per cent address physical inactivity.

In Mongolia, particular efforts are also being made to reduce the risks of alcohol abuse, which has serious implications for our country and the health of future generations. It has become one of the major factors contributing to accidents, traffic injuries, crime, violence and unemployment. Studies in Mongolia have shown that alcohol abuse is also associated with poverty. Our efforts in that regard include, among others, the nationwide promotion of public education against alcohol consumption and an increase in the taxes on alcohol. In 2011, the President of Mongolia issued an appeal calling for abstention from alcohol, which received wide support from the Government, the private health sector and civil society organizations.

I would like to inform this body that, last year, during the High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, Mongolia put forward an idea for developing an international convention on the control of alcohol consumption, similar to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. We earnestly hope that that idea will receive due consideration within the framework of WHO in the coming years. My Government remains fully committed to cooperating on that matter.

While accelerating our efforts towards achieving all of the MDGs worldwide, we must also work on the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. My delegation highly appreciates the steps undertaken by the Secretary-General in that regard. We believe that the work of the United Nations System Task Team on that topic greatly contributes to the ongoing processes of consultation at various levels.

Four interconnected core dimensions proposed by the Task Team can serve as the basis for the definition of the goals and targets of future agendas. To support the implementation of the agenda, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his report, the global partnership for development would need to be strengthened as a responsibility shared by all countries and involving all stakeholders through a well-defined accountability framework. We also look forward to the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the topic in 2013.

Furthermore, we believe that greener and more sustainable economic development should be adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda in order to address the widely shared need to work towards a single unified global development agenda with sustainable development at its core. We also support the observation that we should have an inclusive, open and transparent process with multi-stakeholder participation through national, regional and global forums, other intergovernmental processes and special General Assembly meetings on development. In that respect, we are looking forward with great expectation to the outcome of a special event to be convened during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in September 2013.

Our national implementation of the MDGs has been evidenced by our fourth national report, which noted that 77.9 per cent of the targets had been met, thus providing a positive effect on the nation's development.

Unfortunately, regression has been seen in terms of some of the targets, and it is expected that some will not be met if the current pace continues. Those targets include MDG 1, on halving poverty, and MDG 7, on ensuring environmental sustainability and eliminating pollution, which have become issues of concern for every Mongolian. That calls for stepped-up national action and a greater focus on multilateral partnership. Furthermore, the implementation of our MDGs-based comprehensive national development strategy up to 2021 is expected to lay the foundation for strengthened, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development in Mongolia beyond 2015.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my delegation's strong resolve to work together with fellow Member States towards strengthening the United Nations system, so that it remains an effective centre for advancing the development agenda around the world in the years to come.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): I shall confine my comments to agenda item 14, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", and the follow-up to resolution 65/309.

The fundamental goal of every person is to lead a fulfilling, meaningful and happy life is. In fact, that is what makes us human. It was therefore fitting that, on 19 July 2011, through the unanimous adoption of resolution 65/309, entitled "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development", this body resolved that it was time to accept well-being and happiness as a fundamental and universal goal that binds all of humankind with a common vision and the quest for a holistic, sustainable and inclusive approach to development.

A few months ago, the General Assembly also declared 20 March as the International Day of Happiness (resolution 66/281). That day is an opportunity for humankind to celebrate every precious component that makes life worth living and to strive for genuine happiness.

Mandated by resolution 65/309, Bhutan was honoured to host a meeting on 2 April, at United Nations Headquarters, on the theme "Happiness and well-being: defining a new economic paradigm". The meeting was a gathering of 800 extraordinary minds, including world leaders, members of academia and concerned citizens, moved by the urgent need for change to a global path that focuses more on human well-being and happiness.

Pursuant to the recommendation of that meeting, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck established an international expert working group, made up of 50 thought leaders of the world. They have been given the crucial responsibility of elaborating the details of the proposed new development approach in the coming two years. Simultaneously, His Majesty the King also appointed a national steering committee to guide and support the process.

The working group will elaborate and refine the four themes, namely, well-being and happiness, ecological sustainability, fair distribution and the efficient use of resources. It will prepare a detailed report on how the new development approach can work in practice. It will also explore accounting and assessment systems, regulatory and financial mechanisms, and trade, governance and institutional arrangements. We believe that the findings will complement and contribute to the current efforts of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons and the open working group on sustainable development goals and the United Nations post-2015 development agenda.

We welcome with appreciation the note of the Secretary-General on the pursuit of well-being and happiness, which is available via the website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We are greatly encouraged by the number of initiatives undertaken by Member States and international organizations.

Bhutan remains fully committed to the promotion of a sustainable and progressive human civilization within a peaceful and secure environment. To advance that endeavour, Bhutan is prepared to further share its experience and modest development achievements.

In that regard, Bhutan would like to initiate a draft procedural resolution on well-being and happiness in the plenary of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The draft resolution will pursue the allocation of a new agenda sub-item on the topic under sustainable development. We seek the valuable support of the Assembly in adopting a consensus resolution to better capture the importance of the universal goal of every human being, namely, the pursuit of well-being and happiness.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I take the floor to speak on the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/67/201. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and to compliment him for his extremely informative and well analysed report on strengthening the institutional arrangements for the support of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

When we established the edifice of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), last year, through resolution 64/289, we had envisaged it to be an ambitious, results-oriented and dynamic entity advancing the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment globally. Today, as we near the second operational year of UN-Women, my delegation is happy to note the significant milestones that the entity has achieved under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Bachelet, in such a short span of time.

The ways in which UN-Women has been able to influence policy narratives across the globe, whether on issues such as women's rights in developing countries, services for gender-based violence survivors in the occupied Palestinian territory, or in championing the rights of indigenous women in Ecuador, have certainly achieved small, yet significant, milestones in a brief but important journey.

In the South Asia region, UN-Women's work in areas ranging from political participation and leadership, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and gender responsive annual budgeting has been enabling critical factors in terms of shaping national policy narratives.

In that regard, allow me to place on record the sincerest appreciation for UN-Women of my nodal Ministry, namely, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, for their active partnership and constructive advice in the working group on our twelfth plan's chapter on women's agency and empowerment. Its agenda of making gender equality a lived reality finds resonance in the overall policy approach of the Government of India. That agenda has also been outlined in the twelfth five-year plan of my country.

UN-Women, in partnership with the Government of India, has enabled more than half a million elected women representatives in five States of India to realize their rights and develop their leadership skills through the Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia programme. By the end of this year, nearly 365 million Indian women will have been empowered by the programme, which is designed to build the capacity of those women. They are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to participate in local governance. UN-Women's programme on the Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative has been assessed as highly effective in increasing women's access to entitlements provided as part of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and in securing livelihoods for many underprivileged families.

In the field of political empowerment, in States with the largest proportion of women in the population, such as Bihar and Orissa, UN-Women has helped women candidates to file nominations and manage electoral campaigns in local Panchayat elections through a campaign assisted by civil society partners.

In terms of macropolicy partnerships within the Government, support from UN-Women to the Gender Responsive Budgeting initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development has also helped various ministries develop in-house expertise. Through UN-Women's training programmes and continuous interaction, more than 500 Government counterparts have been trained in gender budgeting.

As we draw close to the end of the second operational year of UN-Women, my delegation is satisfied to note the progress achieved by that entity as it scales up its operations and embarks on the pursuit of its mandate. While we are fully conscious that the task at hand is enormous, my delegation is encouraged by the progress made in reinstating the leading role of the United Nations in pursuing gender equality and the empowerment of women under the able leadership of Ms. Michelle Bachelet.

India is home to more than 500 million women, and we are firmly convinced that ensuring the rightful place of women in society is not only a moral imperative but also an essential prerequisite for achieving peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Our well-recognized success in the political empowerment of women is transforming the traditional and entrenched power dynamic in both rural and urban India. Women are finding their rightful place in all walks of professional and political life, ranging from the highest echelons of the corporate empire to the Government bureaucracy. They occupy the highest offices in India, including, at present, those of the Speaker of the lower house of Parliament and the leader of the opposition and, until a few months back, the Office of the President of India. More importantly, today, more than 1 million women serve on local Government bodies, where they exercise decision-making authority on an almost daily basis.

Let me conclude by reaffirming India's steadfast commitment to the global, regional and national efforts to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report. We assure members that India will not be found wanting in support and cooperation in realizing the shared vision that Member States envisaged in the creation of UN-Women.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with resolution 57/32, of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I take the floor to speak on agenda item 113, on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. When the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) was adopted in 2000, it was greeted with great hope. An important highlight was, of course, the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a set of commitments that all countries could realistically achieve within the span of 15 years.

With only three years left until the target date for the implementation of the MDGs, the record is mixed. Globally, some of the Goals appear to be on track but the picture becomes less clear the moment we look at the individual scorecards of most countries. With only a short time left before 2015, we cannot afford to waste a day. We must all collectively continue to work hard to fill significant gaps.

For several years now, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has helped raise awareness of the MDGs among parliamentarians. We have done that through a number of debates and resolutions that provide a consensus approach to the various Goals. We have also achieved that by helping parliaments strengthen their capacities to oversee Government action, adopt enabling legislation and make budgetary decisions that are in alignment with the development priorities of each country.

While recognizing that all of the Goals are important, we have chosen to focus particularly on the health-related Goals, that is, those on maternal and child mortality and HIV/AIDS, which, in our view, play a key role in removing a number of significant obstacles. In support of Goal 3, on gender equality and women's empowerment, we continue to invest considerable resources in promoting the participation of women in politics. We are also working to strengthen development cooperation as a key to the realization of the MDGs and, indeed, of the development agenda as a whole. That can be seen, for instance, in our very active engagement within the Development Cooperation Forum and, more recently, in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Finally, and most critically, we have been working to evaluate some of the institutional mechanisms, such as parliamentary committees or caucuses, which may help parliaments organize their work around the MDGs through their key functions of oversight, legislation and representation. In many of those activities, we have enjoyed a good partnership with the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme and its Millennium Campaign.

While acceleration towards achieving the MDGs must remain our primary obligation at this critical junction, it is also important to take stock of lessons that we should have learned by now as the international community begins to chart a new post-2015 development framework. From the IPU perspective, the most important lesson has been that of ensuring the early involvement of parliaments in the shaping of development goals. That is critical in order to ensure national ownership and accountability across the board and will, eventually, also help support implementation through the whole legislative process. That is why we are very pleased to see that the resolution adopted in June on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU contains a clear reference to encouraging parliaments to contribute to the design of the next generation of development goals (resolution 66/261).

In order to deliver on that call, the IPU has begun to work with parliaments to facilitate their involvement in the post-2015 development consultations now under way, both globally and at the country level. We welcome the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, which has already begun its work, as well as the open working group that is tasked with focusing specifically on a new generation of sustainable development goals. Pursuant to both of those processes, we are planning a series of consultations with parliamentarians that will, hopefully, inject a strong parliamentary perspective into the deliberations.

Among other things, the IPU is working with the Millennium Campaign and other United Nations partners at the regional and the subregional levels to help gather the views of parliaments, with due regard for regional particularities. Consultations have already taken place in Africa and are under way in Asia. Another important building block in the process is the 128th IPU Assembly, to be held in Ecuador in March of next year and whose theme will be rethinking the development model in terms of well-being, rather than in terms of economic growth alone. Again, in cooperation with our United Nations partners, we will use the Assembly in Quito to compile a survey of parliamentarians and to discuss specific aspects of the future development framework at various moments during the general debate, as well as through a specialized workshop. Meanwhile, we are looking for practical ways to engage parliamentarians in the national consultations that are expected to take place by the end of next March, as well as in a number of electronic consultations that are in the pipeline at various United Nations sites. All of those efforts will culminate in next year's joint parliamentary hearing at the United Nations, here in New York, where parliamentarians from around the world will review the concrete proposals that are expected to emerge from the various United Nations processes.

As with Governments, the views of parliamentarians on the contents of a post-2015 development agenda can be expected to range widely both in scope and in direction. However, some issues have already arisen in our discussions, namely, the central roles of democracy and development cooperation. The problem of development is not only economic but also political. Unequal access to and participation in decision-making, which often flows out of an unequal distribution of incomes and wealth, confrontational politics where the winner takes all, and other such imbalances, are the root caused of many development failures. Because democratic governance must underpin all areas of development policy, it must also then find expression in the future sustainable development goals with clearly defined indicators or objectives. We propose to come back to the General Assembly at a future date with some suggestions as to how that can be done.

Equally important, the post-2015 development framework will have to be accompanied by a clear commitment to financing. Just as the MDGs have been handicapped by financing of both poor quality and insufficient quantity, the success of the future sustainable development goals will depend in part on the formulation of a successor goal to current MDG 8, on developing a global partnership for development. The new goal, however formulated, will of course need to reflect the current landscape of development cooperation, with its multiplicity of public and private actors and corresponding flows.

In conclusion, the next three years will be decisive, not only for the implementation of the current MDGs as a key platform of the original Millennium Declaration but also for the definition of a common vision of the future. As it became most evident at the Rio Conference on Sustainable Development last June, the world community is at a turning point in more ways than one, and strong leadership will be required as we approach some very difficult decisions. The Assembly can rest assured of the support of the IPU in the journey ahead.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/83 of 9 December 2003, I now call on the observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Mr. Tommasoli (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance): The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) commends Mongolia for the leadership role that it has played in the promotion of the draft resolution on education for development (A/67/L.25), and welcomes the consideration of the draft resolution and its adoption. We strongly support the draft resolution's encouragement of the integration of education for democracy into national education standards and the development of national and subnational programmes through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, given the mobility of students, existing regional institutional education frameworks and the limited harmonization of curricula, cooperation and collaboration in the field of education for democracy at the regional level should also be strengthened.

There is solid evidence that doing so can contribute to citizens' empowerment and their participation in political life and policymaking at all levels. Our experience, as well as the work of many United Nations funds, agencies and programmes, and other international organizations, shows that investing in education is important for both democracy and development. It is possibly the most effective way of simultaneously generating impacts on human development and the consolidation of democratic institutions and processes.

The truth of that assertion can be seen from two different and interlinked perspectives: the right to education and the transformative power of education for the development of democratic governance. As regards the first perspective, any democratic constitution enshrines and guarantees the right to education. That is a fundamental issue for the assessment of whether economic and social rights are equally guaranteed for all. For example, the state-of-democracy assessment methodology developed by International IDEA and applied by citizens groups and organizations in over 20 countries, contains a question on how extensive and inclusive the right to education, including education in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, is in a given country. As witnessed by the debates on the constitutional reforms accompanying political transitions, not least in the Arab region, the constitutional dimension of the right to education is one of the most important issues addressed. It has a direct impact on an inclusive concept of citizenship, especially in relation to gender equality.

The second perspective — the transformative power of education for democracy — is particularly important for democracy-building and democracy assistance. In the electoral field it has a direct impact on democratic values, practices and behaviours. In fact,, education for democracy is directly linked to voter education and therefore contributes to one of most visible and traditional forms of democratic participation. But it is equally important in other areas of democracy-building, like parliamentary support and political party development. In fact, education for democracy and the consolidation of a democratic constitutional culture shape the institutions and the substance of democratic dialogue among political stakeholders. It should ultimately contribute to effective legislative and executive action within the framework of democratic accountability.

International IDEA, in partnership with the United Nations and other international actors, has developed a global training curriculum on electoral processes, known as Building Resources for Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE), which is widely used in political transitions for training election administrators using adult education techniques. It is no coincidence that one of the key modules of BRIDGE focuses on civic education, covering such areas as the rationale for citizen participation in the democratic processes; strategies for increasing the participation of key stakeholder groups and beneficiaries, including youth, media, women, and people with disabilities; and techniques for identifying the different educational needs of all stakeholders in civic education processes by considering both community-based and school-based civic education. That example underscores the importance of adult education alongside formal education for the attainment of the objectives set in the resolution that is being considered today. Education for democracy is, in fact, a lifelong endeavour.

In conclusion, International IDEA welcomes the recognition by the draft resolution that education is key to the strengthening of democratic institutions, the realization of human rights and the achievement of all international goals, including the MDGs. In the MDG context, education is an enabler at many levels. At the same time, education is also one of the goals of the MDG framework, with specific indicators and targets, and a crucial factor for the consolidation and development of democratic institutions and the achievement of the other MDGs. International IDEA thinks that the interlinkages between education, democratic institutions and the MDGs should be further stressed in the ongoing policy debates regarding the post-2015 development agenda.

International IDEA stands committed to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations to promote education for democracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.25, entitled "Education for democracy".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/67/L.25, entitled "Education for democracy", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In paragraphs 7 and 9 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education to seek, in close cooperation with Member States, the views of Governments, United Nations agencies and programmes, civil society and other relevant United Nations mandate holders, in order to consider including, in his next report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, an update on Member States' efforts in the field of education for democracy; and invite Governments, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to intensify their efforts to promote education for democracy; and request the Secretary-General, within existing reporting obligations, to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

The request for documentation contained in paragraphs 7 and 9 will constitute an addition to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management corresponding to an estimated amount of $113,200, which would be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. Hence the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.25 would not entail any additional appropriation under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.25.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.25, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.25?

Draft resolution A/67/L.25 was adopted (resolution 67/18).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 14, 113 and 119.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.44

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

44th plenary meeting

Thursday, 29 November 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 37

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19, A/67/L.20 and A/67/L.28)

The President: At the request of the sponsors and in view of the presence of the President of the Palestinian Authority, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, I should like to advise members that the Assembly will first take action on draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". The Assembly will then continue to hold its debate on agenda item 37 immediately following its consideration of the draft resolution.

In the light of that circumstance, and there being no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.28.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the honour, as Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan and Chairman of the Group of Arab Ambassadors at the United Nations, to welcome the sincere children of Palestine present here, who have displayed patience, steadfastness and good faith, demonstrating that they are excellent champions of the Palestinian cause. I especially welcome President Abbas, Abu Mazen, our brother the leader. I welcome his delegation to this historic meeting on this historic day.

I also have the honour and the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", as contained in document A/67/L.28, under agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine". I introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, China, Comoros, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe and Palestine.

This important draft resolution aims to take a historic decision to grant Palestine the status of a non-member observer State. Its preambular part reaffirms the unacceptability of the acquisition of territory by force, as stipulated in the Charter. Other preambular paragraphs reaffirm the right of the

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Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to an independent State of Palestine.

The preambular paragraphs reaffirm relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions concerning the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, mentioning, among other things, that Israel must withdraw from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, starting with the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent State, must be realized, along with an equitable settlement for the Palestinian refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III) and a complete cessation of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The preambular part further recalls resolution 43/177, in which the Assembly acknowledged the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988. It also reaffirms the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders and the right of both States to live side by side in peace and security.

In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence in their State of Palestine on the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

We call on the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of a non-member observer State. I will repeat that. We are asking the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, without prejudging the rights, privileges and role accorded the Palestine Liberation Organization as representative of the Palestinian people.

The operative paragraphs also affirm the determination of the General Assembly to contribute to the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the attainment of a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict that ends the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, making possible the realization of the vision of two States. They also express the urgent need to resume and expedite negotiations in order to achieve a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

Paragraph 6 urges all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to continue to support the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination, independence and freedom. Those are all principles that have been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. On this historic date, those principles will be enshrined.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today, which will make this body's views official, has been a long time in coming. Sixty-five years ago today, when the United Nations decided to partition historic Palestine into two States, one acquired independence, but the other one waited until this historic day. The eyes of all the children of Palestine are looking to this moment and to this Assembly to see their aspirations and hopes fully realized.

Since that day 65 years ago, the General Assembly has annually adopted many important resolutions reaffirming the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, as well as the need to achieve a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine under resolutions of international legitimacy. In that respect, the draft resolution is a qualitative addition along the path to achieving the international will to establish a real peace in the Middle East based on the two-State solution. That is why I call upon all States to contribute today to making history and to pave the way to the future by voting for the draft resolution.

To conclude, I can only express, on behalf of the Arab Group, our great gratitude and appreciation to all the States that have sponsored the draft resolution, thereby demonstrating their support for the principles of the Charter. This is a victory for the values of justice and truth and for the Palestinian question and the Palestinian people, who are watching us today.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Palestine comes today to the General Assembly at a time when it is still tending to its wounds and burying its beloved martyrs — the men, women and children who fell victim to the latest Israeli aggression — a time when it is still searching for remnants of life amid the ruins of homes destroyed by Israeli bombs on the Gaza Strip, wiping out entire families, their men, women and children, all murdered along with their dreams, their hopes, their future and their longing to live an ordinary life and to live in freedom and peace.

Palestine comes today to the General Assembly because it believes in peace and because its people, as proven in the course of the past few days, are in desperate need of it.

Palestine comes today to this prestigious international forum, the representative and protector of international legitimacy, reaffirming our conviction that the international community now stands before the last chance to save the two-State solution. Palestine comes to the Assembly today at a defining moment regionally and internationally, in order to reaffirm its presence and to protect the possibilities and the foundations of the just peace that is deeply hoped for in our region.

The Israeli aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip has confirmed once again the extraordinary, urgent and pressing need to end the Israeli occupation and for our people to gain their freedom and independence. That aggression also confirms the Israeli Government's adherence to the policy of occupation, brute force and war, which in turn obliges the international community to shoulder its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and towards peace. That is why we are here today.

I say with great pain and sorrow that there was assuredly no one in the world who asked dozens of Palestinian children to lose their lives in order to reaffirm the aforementioned facts. There did not have to be thousands of deadly raids and tons of explosives for the world to be reminded that there was an occupation that needed to end and that there was a people that needed to be freed. Nor was there a need for a new, devastating war in order for us to be aware of the absence of peace. That is why we are here today.

The Palestinian people miraculously recovered from the ashes of Al-Nakba of 1948, which was intended to extinguish their being and to expel them, to uproot them and erase their presence, which was rooted in the depths of their land and the depths of history. In those dark days, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were torn from their homes and displaced within and outside their homeland. As part of one of the most dreadful campaigns of ethnic cleansing and dispossession in modern history, they were thrown from their beautiful, embracing, prosperous country into refugee camps.

In those dark days, our people looked to the United Nations as a beacon of hope and appealed for an end to the injustice, for justice and peace and for the realization of our rights. Our people still believe in those aims and continue to wait. That is why we are here today.

In the course of our long national struggle, our people have always strived to ensure harmony and consistency among the goals and means of their struggle, international law and the spirit of the era, in accordance with the prevailing realities and changes. Despite the horrors that befell them, and continue to befall them today, as a consequence of Al-Nakba and its horrors, our people have always strived not to lose their humanity, their highest and deeply held moral values and their innovative ability for survival, steadfastness, creativity and hope. Despite the enormity and complexity of that task, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the committed leader of their revolution and struggle, has consistently strived to achieve that harmony and consistency.

In 1988, when the Palestine National Council decided to pursue the Palestinian peace initiative and adopted the declaration of independence, on the basis of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, under the leadership of the late President Yasser Arafat, it in fact took a historic, difficult and courageous decision that defined the requirements for a historic reconciliation that would turn the page on war, aggression and occupation. That was no easy matter. Yet, we had the courage and sense of responsibility to take the right decision in order to protect the higher national interests of our people and to affirm our adherence to and conformity with international legitimacy. In that same year, that decision was welcomed, supported and endorsed by the Assembly that is meeting today.

Over the past months in particular, we and the members of the General Assembly have heard a constant stream of Israeli threats in response to our peaceful, political and diplomatic effort for Palestine to acquire non-member observer status in the United Nations. Members have certainly witnessed how some of those threats were barbarically and horrifically carried out in the Gaza Strip only days ago.

We have not heard a word from any Israeli official expressing any sincere concern about saving the peace process. On the contrary, our people have witnessed, and continue to witness, an unprecedented escalation of military attacks, the blockade, settlement activities and ethnic cleansing, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem. They have seen mass arrests and attacks by settlers, as well as other practices with which the Israeli occupation is becoming synonymous. Israel's apartheid system of colonial occupation institutionalizes the plague of racism and entrenches hatred and incitement.

The Israeli Government's conviction that it is above international law and that it is immune from accountability and responsibility allows it to blatantly continue its aggressive policies and perpetration of war crimes. Unfortunately, that belief is bolstered by the failure of some to condemn and to demand the cessation of those violations and crimes and by positions that equate the victim and the perpetrator. The time has come for the world to say clearly enough aggression, enough settlements and enough occupation. That is why we are here now.

We have not come here seeking to delegitimize a State established decades ago, that is, Israel. Rather, we have come to affirm the legitimacy of a State that must now achieve its independence, namely, Palestine. We have not come here to add further complications to the peace process, which Israel's policies have cast into disarray. Rather, we have come to launch a final serious attempt to achieve peace. We seek not to put an end to what remains of the negotiations process, which has lost its utility and credibility, but rather to try to breathe new life into the negotiations. We seek to ensure a solid foundation for that process, on the basis of the terms of reference of the relevant international resolutions, so that the negotiations can succeed.

On behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I say that we will not give up, we will not tire and our determination will not wane. We will continue to strive to achieve a just peace. However, above all, I affirm that our people will not relinquish their inalienable national rights, as defined by United Nations resolutions. Our people cling to the right to defend themselves against aggression and occupation. They will continue their popular and peaceful resistance and their historic resolve and will to build their land. They will end the hateful division and strengthen their national unity. We will accept no less than the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on all the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, as well as a solution to the refugee issue on the basis of resolution 194 (III), in line with the operative part of the Arab Peace Initiative.

I do not believe that this is some kind of terrorism that we pursue in the United Nations. Nevertheless, in that connection, we once again reiterate the warning that the window of opportunity is narrowing and that time will soon run out. Patience is wearing thin and hope is withering. The innocent lives that have been taken by Israeli bombs — amounting to more than 168 martyrs, mostly children and women, including 12 members of the Dalou family in Gaza — are a painful reminder to the world that the racist and colonial occupation is making the two-State solution, and the prospect for realizing peace, a very difficult, if not an impossible, choice. It is time for action and the moment to move forward. That is why we are here today.

The world is being asked today to answer a specific question that we have often repeated: is there a surplus of people in our region? Tell us. The world must say whether we are a surplus people or whether there is a State missing, which must be established on its land, that is, in Palestine. The world is being asked to take a significant step in the process of rectifying the unprecedented historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people since Al-Nakba of 1948.

Every vote in the Assembly supporting our endeavour today is a most valuable voice of courage, and every State that grants support today to Palestine's request for non-member observer State status is affirming its principled and moral support for freedom, the rights of peoples, international law and peace. The Assembly's support for our endeavour today will send a promising message to millions of Palestinians in the land of Palestine and in the refugee camps both in the homeland and throughout the diaspora and to the prisoners struggling for freedom in Israel's prisons that justice is possible and that there is a reason to be hopeful, and that the peoples of the world do not accept the continuation of the occupation. That is why we are here today.

The support of the Assembly for our endeavour today will give a reason for hope to a people besieged by a racist, colonial occupation. Unfortunately, failure in this endeavour would almost amount to complicity in Israel's aggression and in a state of paralysis that some are striving to impose on the will of the international community. The Assembly's support will confirm to our people that they are not alone and that their wager on international law will never be a losing proposition.

In our endeavour today to acquire non-member observer status for Palestine in the United Nations, we reaffirm that Palestine will always adhere to and respect the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, uphold equality, guarantee civil liberties, uphold the rule of law, promote democracy and pluralism, and uphold and protect the rights of women. That is what we are pledging today. As we promised our friends and our brothers and sisters, we will continue to consult with them upon the approval of our request to upgrade Palestine's status by this body. We will act responsibly and positively in our next steps, and we will work to strengthen cooperation with the countries and peoples of the world for the sake of a just peace.

Sixty-five years ago on this day, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the land of historic Palestine into two States and became the birth certificate for Israel. Sixty-five years later and on the same day, which this body has designated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the General Assembly stands before a moral duty, which it must not hesitate to undertake; before an historic duty, which cannot endure further delay; and before a practical duty to salvage the chances for peace, which is urgent and cannot be postponed.

The General Assembly is called upon today to issue a birth certificate to the reality of the State of Palestine. That is specifically why we are here today. Our hope is in God and in the General Assembly. May peace be upon the Assembly.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Today I stand before the Assembly, tall and proud, because I represent the world's one and only Jewish State, a State built in the Jewish people's ancient homeland, with its eternal capital, Jerusalem, as its beating heart. We are a nation with deep roots in the past and bright hopes for the future. We are a nation that values idealism but acts with pragmatism. Israel is a nation that never hesitates to defend itself, but will always, always extend its hand for peace.

Peace is a central value of Israeli society. The Bible calls on us and says "Seek peace and pursue it". Peace fills our art and poetry. It is taught in our schools. It has been the goal of the Israeli people and every Israeli leader since Israel was re-established 64 years ago. Israel's declaration of independence states:

> "We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help".

This week was the thirty-fifth anniversary of President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem. In a speech just before the visit, President Sadat famously stood in the Egyptian Parliament in Cairo and stated that he would go "to the ends of the Earth" to make peace with Israel. Israel's Prime Minister at the time, Menachem Begin, welcomed President Sadat to Israel and paved the way for peace. This morning, Prime Minister Netanyahu stood at the Menachem Begin Center and said this about the draft resolution on which the General Assembly is about to vote:

> "Israel is prepared to live in peace with a Palestinian State, but for peace to endure, Israel's security must be protected. The Palestinians must recognize the Jewish State and they must be prepared to end the conflict with Israel once and for all. None of these vital interests, these vital interests of peace, none of them appear in the draft resolution that will be put forward before the General Assembly today, and that is why Israel cannot accept it. The only way to achieve peace is through agreements that are reached by the parties and not through United Nations resolutions that completely ignore Israel's vital security and national interests. And because this resolution is so one-sided, it doesn't advance peace; it pushes it backwards.
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> "As for the rights of Jewish people in this land, I have a simple message for those people gathered in the General Assembly today: no decision by the United Nations can break the 4,000 year-old bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel."

The people of Israel wait for a Palestinian leader who is willing to follow in the footsteps of President Sadat. The world waits for President Abbas to speak the truth that peace can be achieved only through negotiations by recognizing Israel as a Jewish State. It waits for him to tell them that peace must also address Israel's security needs and end the conflict once and for all. For as long as President Abbas prefers symbolism over reality, as long as he prefers to travel to New York for United Nations resolutions, rather than to Jerusalem for genuine dialogue, any hope of peace will be out of reach.

Israel has always extended its hand in peace and will always extend its hand for peace. When we faced an Arab leader who wanted peace, we made peace. That was the case with Egypt, and that was the case with Jordan. Time and again, we have sought peace with the Palestinians. Time and again, we have been met by rejection of our offers, denial of our rights and terrorism targeting our citizens.

President Abbas described today's proceedings as historic, but the only historic thing about his speech was how much it ignored history.

The truth is that 65 years ago today, the United Nations voted to partition the British Mandate into two States: a Jewish State and an Arab State. Two States for two peoples. Israel accepted that plan. The Palestinians and Arab nations around us rejected it and launched a war of annihilation to throw the Jews into the sea.

The truth is that from 1948 until 1967 the West Bank was ruled by Jordan and Gaza was ruled by Egypt. The Arab States did not lift a finger to create a Palestinian State. Instead, they sought Israel's destruction and were joined by newly formed Palestinian terrorist organizations.

The truth is that at Camp David in 2000, and again at Annapolis in 2008, Israeli leaders made far-reaching offers for peace. Those offers were met by rejection, evasion and even terrorism. The truth is that to advance peace, in 2005 Israel dismantled entire communities and uprooted thousands of people from their homes in the Gaza Strip. And rather than use that opportunity to build a peaceful future, the Palestinians turned Gaza into an Iranian terror base, from which thousands of rockets were fired into Israeli cities. As we were reminded just last week, the area has been turned into a launching pad for rockets into Israeli cities, a haven for global terrorists and an ammunition dump for Iranian weapons.

Time after time, the Palestinian leadership has refused to accept responsibility. They have refused to make the tough decisions for peace.

Israel remains committed to peace, but we will not establish another Iranian terror base in the heart of our country. We need a peace that will endure, a peace that will secure the future of Israel.

Three months ago, Israel's Prime Minister stood in this very Hall, at this very rostrum (see A/67/PV.12), and extended his hand in peace to President Abbas. He reiterated that his goal was to create a solution of two States for two peoples, where a demilitarized Palestinian State would recognize Israel as a Jewish State. That is right — two States for two peoples.

In fact, I did not hear President Abbas use the phrase "two States for two peoples" this afternoon. In fact, I have never heard him say the phrase "two States for two peoples", because the Palestinian leadership has never recognized that Israel is the nation State of the Jewish people. They have never been willing to accept what this very body recognized 65 years ago — Israel is the Jewish State. In fact, today he asked the world to recognize a Palestinian State, but he still refused to recognize the Jewish State. Not only does he not recognize the Jewish State, he is also trying to erase Jewish history. This year, he even tried to erase the connection between the Jewish people and Jerusalem. He said that Jews were trying to alter the historical character of Jerusalem. He said that we are trying to "Judaize Jerusalem".

I would like to say to President Abbas that the truth is that Jerusalem had a Jewish character long before most cities in the world had any character. Three thousand years ago, King David ruled from Jerusalem, and Jews have lived in Jerusalem ever since.

It is time that President Abbas, instead of revising history, started making history by making peace with Israel.

This draft resolution (A/67/L.28) will not advance peace. This draft resolution will not change the situation on the ground. It will not change the fact that the Palestinian Authority has no control over Gaza — and that is 40 per cent of the territory they claim to represent. President Abbas cannot even visit nearly half the territory of the State he claims to represent. That territory is controlled by Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization that rains missiles on Israeli civilians. That is the same Hamas that fired more than 1,300 rockets into the heart of Israel's major cities this month.

This draft resolution will not confer statehood on the Palestinian Authority, which clearly fails to meet the criteria for statehood. This draft resolution will not enable the Palestinian Authority to join international treaties, organizations or conferences as a State. This draft resolution cannot serve as acceptable terms of reference for peace negotiations with Israel because it says nothing about Israel's security needs. It does not call on the Palestinians to recognize Israel as the Jewish

State, and it does not demand an end to the conflict and a termination of all claims.

Let me tell the Assembly what this draft resolution does do. This draft resolution violates fundamental binding commitments, including a commitment that many of the States represented here today in this Hall were themselves witness to — a commitment that all outstanding issues in the peace process would be resolved only in direct negotiations. The draft resolution sends a message that the international community is willing to turn a blind eye to peace agreements.

For the people of Israel, it raises a simple question: Why continue to make painful sacrifices for peace in exchange for pieces of paper that the other side will not honour? It will make a negotiated peace settlement less likely, as Palestinians continue to harden their positions and place further obstacles and preconditions to negotiations and peace. And, unfortunately, it will raise expectations that cannot be met, which has always proven to be a recipe for conflict and instability.

There is only one route to Palestinian statehood, and that route does not run through this Hall in New York. That route runs through direct negotiations between Jerusalem and Ramallah that will lead to a secure and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. There are no shortcuts, no quick fixes and no instant solutions. As President Obama said in 2010, "Peace cannot be imposed from the outside".

The real message of this draft resolution for the people of Israel is that the international community will turn a blind eye to violations of these agreements by the Palestinians.

In submitting this draft resolution, the Palestinian leadership is once again making the wrong choice. Sixty-five years ago, Palestinians could have chosen to live side by side with the Jewish State of Israel. Sixty-five years ago, they could have chosen to accept the solution of two States for two peoples. They rejected it then, and they are rejecting it again today.

The international community should not encourage that rejection. It should not encourage the Palestinian leadership to drive forward recklessly with both feet pressing down on the gas, no hands on the wheel and no eyes on the road. Instead, it should encourage the Palestinians to enter into direct negotiations without preconditions in order to achieve an historic peace in which a demilitarized Palestinian State recognizes the Jewish State.

Winston Churchill said, "The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it, ignorance may deride it, malice may distort it, but there it is". The truth is that Israel wants peace, and the Palestinians are avoiding peace.

Those who are supporting the draft resolution today are not advancing peace; they are undermining peace. The United Nations was founded to advance the cause of peace. Today the Palestinians are turning their back on peace. Let not history record that today the United Nations helped them along on their march of folly.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): The time has come. The time has come for the international community to set things right. No longer can the world turn a blind eye to the long sufferings of the Palestinian people, the denial of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and the obstruction of their rights to self-determination and to independence. No longer can the world deny the fact that despite the enormous barriers erected by the occupying Power, Palestinians have diligently and with great resolve built the capacity to function as a State ready to stand equal to any other State in this Assembly and ready to unleash its full potential as a positive force for progress.

There can be no reason, therefore, why the international community cannot endorse the request to accord non-member observer State status to Palestine, an entity that some 24 years ago the Assembly, through its resolution 43/177, acknowledged as a State. Indonesia is therefore a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/67/L.28), and we reiterate the hope that Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations will be favourably considered. We hold that Palestine's full membership is consistent with the shared vision of a two-State solution. We believe that an independent State of Palestine, with equal rights and, indeed, responsibilities equal to those of other States, will contribute to the attainment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The recent cycle of indiscriminate violence and disproportionate use of force in Gaza, Palestine, serves as a serious reminder of the need for an earnest resumption and acceleration of the peace process and thus of the need to create conditions conducive to that process. That means ending illegal settlement activities and lifting the blockade of Gaza, thereby putting to an end the inhumane policy of collective punishment. There is a need, too, for Palestine to enhance intra-Palestinian dialogue at this very historic moment.

By according non-member observer State status to the State of Palestine, we are signaling the primacy of diplomacy and the rejection of violence. We are making a strong statement on the need for mutual respect among nations. We are placing faith in the principle of universality of membership of the United Nations. We are beginning to redress a festering historic injustice, and we are affirm that all of humankind, including the long-suffering people of Palestine, are entitled to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Baird (Canada): Canada opposes draft resolution A/67/L.28 in the strongest of terms because it undermines the core foundations of a decades-long commitment on the part of the international community and the parties themselves to a two-State solution, arrived at through direct negotiations.

While we understand that a final resolution remains elusive, Canada has long opposed unilateral actions by either side, as they are unhelpful. The outstanding issues are too intricate and too complex to be resolved by simplistic unilateral measures. We do not believe that unilateral measures taken by one side can be justified by accusations of unilateralism directed at the other. That approach can only result in the steady erosion and collapse of the very foundations of a process that, while incomplete, holds the only realistic chance of bringing about two peaceful, prosperous States living side by side as neighbours.

Canada's support for a negotiated settlement, like our opposition to the initiative before us today, is rooted in the very history of this venerable Organization and in the sustained international effort to resolve this matter. Canada was proud to be one of the countries preparing the blueprint for peace as part of the 1947 United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. That Committee came up with the proposal for a two-State solution — one predominantly Jewish and the other predominantly Arab, living side by side — that ultimately resulted, in November 1947, in the passage of resolution 181 (II) setting out the Partition Plan. However, not all of those who should have supported that vision were prepared to do so, and the people of the region have suffered for seven decades as a result.

Even in those early, difficult days, however, the principle of collaboration between the two parties was seen as an inherent necessity, as reflected in the elaboration of a plan for economic union between the two sides. While resolution 181 (II) has never been fully implemented, the principle — the idea that the two parties need to work together to achieve their mutual and intertwined destinies and potential — has survived as an essential ingredient in successive efforts to find an elusive peace.

In 1948, resolution 194 (III) set up a Conciliation Commission aimed at finding solutions to the full range of problems facing the two sides. It established an important principle in calling for the parties involved to seek agreement through negotiations, with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them.

In 1967, the Security Council adopted resolution 242 (1967). The Council requested the dispatch of a special representative of the Secretary-General to the region to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement, entrenching further the principle that solutions required the acceptance and collective action of both sides. That idea was reaffirmed in 1973 in Council resolution 338 (1973), which decided that immediately and concurrently with the ceasefire, negotiations should start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace.

Those two Security Council resolutions, 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), form the explicitly recognized cornerstone of all subsequent peace commitments, accords and understandings between the two parties, enshrining the need for negotiations as a core principle.

Both the Israelis and the Palestinians reaffirmed their acceptance of the principles and obligations laid out in both resolutions in 1993, with the historic signing of the Oslo Accords. Article I made the point explicitly in highlighting that the interim arrangements are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1993).

In 1995, the Oslo II agreement built on those important foundations. In the preamble, both sides reaffirmed their desire to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process. Final clause 7, under article XXXI, stipulated that neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.

Those principles were again reaffirmed in 2002. Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) called on the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and Mitchell Report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement. It also offered support to the Secretary-General and others in their efforts to resume the peace process.

The following year, 2003, the Middle East Quartet was established. It developed the road map, which was a performance-based, goal-driven plan covering peace, security and humanitarian areas. Its approach and directions were based explicitly on the principles contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). A key element of the Quartet principles contained in the road map was that a clear, unambiguous acceptance by both parties of the goal of a negotiated settlement was needed to reach the destination. It goes on to underscore that a settlement negotiated between the parties will result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. The Quartet road map requires, by its very nature, a collaborative effort explicitly requiring reciprocal steps by the two sides.

Later that year, Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) formally endorsed the Quartet road map, while calling on the parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map in cooperation with the Quartet and to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Resolution 1850 (2008) underscored the Council's explicit support for the negotiations undertaken in Annapolis in 2007 and its commitment to the irreversibility of the bilateral negotiations. That resolution reaffirmed international support for the Quartet principles and supported the determination of both parties to reach their goal of concluding a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, without exception. It also called on both sides to refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations.

Successive Security Council resolutions and various international commitments and understandings over nearly seven decades have formed the building blocks of a collaborative peace process that remains unfinished. The path to peace has historically rested in direct negotiations between the two parties to resolve the outstanding issues, and it remains the same today. Solutions can come only through the two sides working together.

The draft resolution before us will not advance the cause of peace or spur a return to negotiations. Will the Palestinian people be better off as a result? No. On the contrary, this unilateral step will harden positions and raise unrealistic expectations while doing nothing to improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

Canada is committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, whereby two States live side by side in peace, security and prosperity. Any two-State solution must be negotiated between and mutually agreed upon by both sides. Any unilateral action, by either side, outside of the bilateral framework outlined above is ultimately unhelpful.

Canada has long supported efforts to bring the two sides to the bargaining table to resolve all outstanding issues, and we remain committed to that objective today. But we cannot support an initiative that we are firmly convinced will undermine the objective of reaching a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement for both sides. It is for those reasons that Canada is voting against the draft resolution. As a result of this body's utterly regrettable decision to abandon policy and principle, we will be considering all available next steps.

We call on both sides to return to the negotiating table without preconditions. Canada will be there to offer its good offices and full support.

Mr. Davutoğlu (Turkey): In Turkish we have a saying: "One who closes his eyes only makes himself a night". For 65 years, the whole world has shut its eyes to the plight of the Palestinian people. For many decades, we closed our eyes to the right of Palestinian people to their State. And for 65 years, no resolution adopted by this body supporting a Palestinian State has been honoured.

However, no one can wash away the sorrow of the Palestinian people by just closing his eyes. The reality of Palestine is simple, yet harsh. It is on the streets of Gaza, where thousands of people suffer an inhumane blockade in an open prison. It is on the streets of the West Bank, where people have to go through checkpoints on nearly every corner. It is in the heart of the Palestinian people, who have been subjected to exiles, massacres, wars, collective punishment and blockades for many decades. The reality of Palestine is a bleeding wound in the conscience of all humanity — of all of us.

I personally witnessed that reality when I recently visited Gaza with a group of Arab ministers at the height of the recent crisis. In Shifa hospital, in Gaza, I came across a father — Basil Asheva — who had lost his daughter Yusha a moment earlier, during the bombardment that also left his wife severely wounded. Leaning his head on my chest to seek some relief, he had no words, only tears, to tell of his family's tragedy. His tears reflected not only his personal sorrow, but also the tragedy of the whole Palestinian nation, desperately seeking relief.

Today is a milestone. Finally, today we have a chance to open our eyes to reality. Today we have an opportunity to give comfort to the Palestinian people who aspire to have a chance to uphold their dignity, after years of humiliation. I am pleased and honoured, therefore, to participate in this historic meeting of the General Assembly. We have gathered here to correct a historical injustice against the Palestinian people.

We all believe in and cherish the vision of a just, peaceful and harmonious future. For that future, we should all stand together behind the Palestinian bid to become a non-member observer State. It is a moment of truth for all of us. We are all aware that the right of the Palestinians to a State has, unfortunately, been denied for decades. The denial of that right of the Palestinians has no justification on any ground, whether moral, political or legal.

Last year, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, submitted an application for United Nations membership for Palestine (see A/66/PV.19). Unfortunately, the application has been left unanswered by the Security Council. Here comes another chance for us. We call on the international community, the members of this body, to honour their already belated obligation to the Palestinians and to grant them the status of a non-member State. It is high time for all of us to uphold the universal values of justice and dignity. If there is one term that characterizes humankind, it is dignity. One can do without bread, but not without dignity. The struggle of the Palestinian people over the past 65 years has also been about protecting their dignity. They want respect and recognition of their right to determine their fate and future.

We cannot shy away from supporting a fully legitimate demand by the Palestinian people to have a State of their own. If we are to talk about an international order and place our trust in the United Nations system, then the Palestinian flag should fly beside this building. That flag will not only represent an independent Member State among our family of nations. It will represent the fact that we have finally stood together to correct a decades-long injustice to the Palestinian people and the State of Palestine. That is our responsibility to the Palestinian people. Let me be clear. Our vision of justice, international order and human rights will not be achieved until the moment that we actually see the flag of the State of Palestine standing side by side with ours, as a full Member of the United Nations. And that day will come soon.

We have three main reasons to do so. First and foremost, it is a humanitarian and moral obligation on our part. No one can deny the suffering of the Palestinians since the First World War until today. There has always been an excuse for the inhumane treatment of the Palestinian people.

Secondly, it is about the political and historical context. Unfortunately, the negotiation process towards a comprehensive peace on the basis of two States, living side by side in peace, has been put on ice. Instead, we see a deviation, day by day, from the internationally accepted solution that calls for an independent Palestine established with East Jerusalem as its capital inside its 1967 borders. The current status quo is neither sustainable nor acceptable. The recent Israeli attack on Gaza, which resulted in the loss of many innocent civilian lives, was a testimony to that fact. Meanwhile, the continued expansion of the illegal settlements undermines the vision of a two-State solution.

The third aspect concerns our strategic vision for Palestine and for our region. Peace in the Middle East and beyond cannot be achieved without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue. The deadlock in the negotiations and the current stalemate in the region serve the interest of no one. Supporting the Palestinian bid is about whether we want a lasting peace in the Middle East and beyond. Granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer State at the United Nations will serve as a booster. It will create the long-needed momentum for a negotiated, comprehensive solution, rather than serve as a substitute for it. Our call is for peace, no more and no less.

We need to address the issue in a constructive and unbiased manner. It requires wisdom, prudence and vision to no longer deny the prospect of peace and stability in the region. It obliges us to listen to the call for relief and justice for the Palestinian people, to which we have turned a deaf ear so far.

I would also like to address certain misguided efforts aimed at stopping the Palestinians from winning statehood at the United Nations. The argument that the Palestinians must resume negotiations before getting statehood is superficial. We regret to see that there have also been efforts to deter the Palestinians in their bid at the United Nations, as well as efforts to dissuade United Nations Members from supporting that bid. We have often heard, "Now is not the right time", as was the case when President Abbas submitted the Palestinian bid for membership to the Secretary-General.

For some, the timing was also not right when the late President Arafat read out the Palestinian declaration of independence on 15 November 1988. One can trace the argument back to when the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), on the partition, on this very date in 1947. So let me ask bluntly: If not now, when? When will it be the right time for the Palestinians to achieve their right to statehood, if not today?

The current stalemate in the peace process can no longer be used as a pretext to undermine the Palestinian bid for becoming an internationally recognized State. The recognition of Palestinian statehood is not an option but a moral, political, strategic and legal obligation for the international community. And I want to address and salute all Palestinians from Al-Khalil to Bethlehem, from Jenin to Ariha, from Ramallah to Khan Yunis, from Jerusalem — Al Quds Al-Sharif — to Gaza.

Turkey will stand by the Palestinians forever. They are not alone, and we will not abandon them. We will stand by them until there is a free and independent Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, now and forever. I call on all United Nations Members to fulfil their long overdue responsibility towards the Palestinians. I call on them to fulfil a long overdue promise, made with the General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947.

Draft resolution A/67/L.28, on which members will be voting shortly, will be only an initial step in the right direction to bring some relief to the entire Palestinian nation. Now is the moment of truth. It is time to defend the basic right of the Palestinians to statehood. The flag of Palestine should rise in this Assembly next to ours. The State of Palestine must be moved from the shade and given its rightful place in the sun forever.

The President: Before proceeding to consider draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", allow me to make a few remarks in my capacity as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

During the course of this meeting, we have had the distinct privilege of hearing from the representatives of two great nations, President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine and Ambassador Ron Prosor of the State of Israel. They are each children of Abraham — one a descendant of Ishmael, the other of Isaac. Both come from a land that has been almost continuously tormented by conflict over many centuries, with countless victims on all sides. The strife has not abated during the 67 years of the Organization's existence, despite the fact that it came into being to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Notwithstanding the valiant efforts of some of the greatest statesmen of the twentieth century, a negotiated, comprehensive settlement enabling Israel and Palestine to live side by side, in peace and security, has yet to materialize. And so we continue to witness enmity, estrangement and mistrust as parents continue to bury their children.

In today's globalized, interconnected world what happens between the River Jordan and the shores of the Mediterranean has become the key to the security and well-being of all humankind.

I have no doubt that history will judge this day to have been fraught with significance. But whether it will come to be looked upon as a step in the right direction on the road to peace will depend upon how we bear ourselves in its wake. Let us therefore find the wisdom to act in furtherance of the goal that we all share.

In coming to the end of my remarks, allow me to extend an appeal from this rostrum to all memberes, in particular to my dear friends from Palestine and Israel, to work for peace, to negotiate in good faith and, ultimately, to succeed in reaching the historical settlement. That is our common and most solemn duty to the entire world, but first and foremost to the proud men and women who live in a land that is holy to so many of us.

In the Zohar it is written that "God is peace, his name is peace, and all is bound together in peace." And in the Holy Koran we read that "Allah invites [all] to the abode of peace and guides whom he pleases onto the right path" (*The Holy Koran, X:25*).

In a few moments, I will ask members to cast their ballots as they see fit. I am sure that each member will do so with a veritable feeling in their hearts that their choice is serving the cause of a righteous peace.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". I give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Graisse.

Mr. Graisse: (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/67/L.28, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Angola, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, Grenada, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, the Niger, Sri Lanka, Suriname and Viet Nam.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Panama, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Fiji, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.28 was adopted by 138 votes to 9, with 41 abstentions (resolution 67/19).

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: An important vote has taken place today in the General Assembly. The decision by the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member State status in the United Nations was a prerogative of the Member States. I stand ready to fulfil my role and report to the Assembly as requested in resolution 67/19.

My position has been consistent all along. I believe that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to their own independent State. I believe that Israel has the right to live in peace and security with its neighbours. There is no substitute for negotiations to that end.

Today's vote underscores the urgency of a resumption of meaningful negotiations. We must give a new impetus to our collective efforts to ensure that an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine lives side by side with a secure State of Israel. I urge the parties to renew their commitment to a negotiated peace. I count on all concerned to act responsibly, preserve the achievements in Palestinian State-building under the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, and intensify efforts towards reconciliation and the just and lasting peace that remains our shared goal and priority.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

We shall now proceed to explanations of vote. I should like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): For decades, the United States has worked to help achieve a comprehensive end to the long and tragic Arab-Israeli conflict. We have always been clear that only through direct negotiations between the parties can the Palestinians and Israelis achieve the peace that both deserve — two States for two peoples, with a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine living side by side in peace and security with a Jewish and democratic Israel.

That remains our goal, and we therefore measure any proposed action against that clear yardstick. Will it bring the parties closer to peace or push them further apart? Will it help Israelis and Palestinians return to negotiations or hinder their efforts to reach a mutually acceptable agreement? Today's unfortunate and counterproductive resolution 67/19 places further obstacles in the path to peace. That is why the United States voted against it.

The backers of today's resolution say they seek a functioning, independent Palestinian State at peace with Israel. So do we. But we have long been clear that the only way to establish such a Palestinian State and resolve all permanent status issues is through the crucial, if painful work of direct negotiations between the parties. That is not just a bedrock commitment of the United States. Israel and the Palestinians have repeatedly affirmed their own obligations under existing agreements to resolve all issues through direct negotiations, which have been endorsed frequently by the international community. The United States agrees — strongly.

Today's grand pronouncements will soon fade, and the Palestinian people will wake up tomorrow and find that little about their lives has changed, save that the prospects of a durable peace have only receded. The United States therefore calls upon both parties to resume direct talks without preconditions on all the issues that divide them, and we pledge that the United States will be there to support the parties vigorously in such efforts. The United States will continue — in the region, in New York, and elsewhere — to urge all parties to avoid any further provocative actions. We will continue to firmly oppose any and all unilateral actions in international bodies or treaties that circumvent or prejudge the very outcomes that can only be negotiated, including Palestinian statehood, and we will continue to stand up to every effort that seeks to delegitimize Israel or undermine its security.

Progress towards a just and lasting two-State solution cannot be made by pressing a green voting button here in this Hall, nor does adopting any resolution create a State where none indeed exists or change the reality on the ground. For that reason, today's voting should not be misconstrued by any as constituting eligibility for United Nations membership. It does not. The resolution does not establish that Palestine is a State.

The United States believes that the current resolution should not and cannot be read as establishing terms of reference. In many respects, the resolution prejudges the very issues it says are to be resolved through negotiation, particularly with respect to territory. At the same time, it virtually ignores other core questions, such as security, that must be solved for any viable agreement to be achieved. President Obama has been clear in stating what the United States believes is a realistic basis for successful negotiations, and we will continue to base our efforts on that approach.

The recent conflict in Gaza is just the latest reminder that the absence of peace risks the presence of war. We urge those who share our hopes for peace between a sovereign Palestine and a secure Israel to join us in supporting negotiations and not to encourage further distractions. There simply are no short cuts. Long after the votes have been cast, long after the speeches have been forgotten, it is the Palestinians and the Israelis who must still talk to each other — and listen to each other — and find a way to live side by side in the land they share.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): In voting today for the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State of the Organization, France has voted in favour of the two-State solution, of two States for two peoples, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders; we have voted in favour of a solution that we had advocated before the entire international community rallied to it — in favour of a solution today threatened by the impasse in the peace process. It is a clear-sighted and coherent choice.

As early as 1982, before the Knesset in Jerusalem, President Mitterrand called for the creation of a Palestinian State. Since then, France has spared no effort to promote that solution. Following in that tradition, President François Hollande undertook in 2012 to support international recognition of the Palestinian State.

France could not miss that rendezvous, which is a new phase in moving towards the two-State solution. France could not fail to hear the appeal of President Abbas for the resumption of a credible peace process; just days after the new explosion of violence between Israel and Gaza, we could not fail to lend our full support to the peace partners as those espousing armed struggle endeavoured to win the day.

The Palestinian move comes at a difficult moment, and the repercussions could be serious. But France calls on all the parties to understand and acknowledge its major significance, and to respond by resuming negotiations, not with reprisals that help no one but extremists. France also calls on the international community — Americans, Europeans and Arabs — to mobilize in order to contribute to that end.

France also appeals to the Palestinians to build on this political success in order to contribute to future peace. That means, first, continuing to fight terrorism and to do everything possible to end the all-too-frequent attacks against Israel; to move forward, on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization commitments, towards inter-Palestinian reconciliation, without which the two-State solution is a mere mirage; above all, to return to the negotiating table immediately and without preconditions; and, finally, to avoid launching a cycle of sterile confrontations in international bodies. For the hardest part is before us and them.

This vision of two States for two peoples must become a reality. The international recognition that the Assembly has today given the proposed Palestinian State can become fact only through an agreement based on negotiations between the two parties on all final status issues, within the framework of a fair and comprehensive peace settlement that responds to Israel and Palestine's legitimate aspirations. That is a challenge not only for the two Governments and peoples, but for the international community as well. France is ready to meet it as a friend of Israel and of Palestine.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): My delegation supports the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. That is why Singapore supported resolutions 66/17 and 66/18 of 30 November 2011. However, we abstained in the voting on today's resolution 67/19 because we believe that only a negotiated settlement consistent with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) can provide the basis for a viable, long-term solution. Both sides have legitimate rights and shared responsibilities, and must be prepared to make compromises to achieve the larger good of a lasting peace.

It is precisely because the rights and responsibilities of both sides are inextricably intertwined that no unilateral move can result in a just, peaceful and durable outcome. Palestine's attempt to upgrade its status in the United Nations to that of a non-member observer State should be viewed in the context of its efforts last year to obtain full United Nations membership. Its aspirations are not helped, because the facts on the ground will not be changed.

Singapore hopes that Israel and Palestine will resume negotiations. Singapore will continue to support all international efforts to facilitate a negotiated solution that will be in the long-term interests of Palestine, Israel and the region as a whole.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We join the international community in welcoming the cessation of attacks on Gaza and southern Israel. We deeply regret the loss of life and the damage caused on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. We hope that both sides will uphold the latest ceasefire and immediately address any humanitarian issues that have resulted from the violence.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the dangerous impasse in the peace process over the past two years. We believe that the window onto a two-State solution is rapidly closing. Our central objective is to achieve a return to credible negotiations in order to secure a two-State solution. That is the guiding principle that determined how we voted on resolution 67/19 today.

In support of that objective, we sought a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to return immediately to negotiations, without preconditions. That was the single most important factor shaping our vote. We also sought an assurance from the Palestinians that they would not pursue immediate action in United Nations agencies and the International Criminal Court, since that would make a swift return to negotiations impossible. We are in no doubt that President Abbas is a courageous man of peace, and we have engaged intensively with the Palestinians ahead of today's voting to try to secure those assurances. But in their absence, we were not able to vote in favour of the resolution, and we therefore abstained.

Our priority now is to restart negotiations. We urge all parties, including Israel, to avoid taking steps in response to today's events that could damage the peace process. Palestine will be a non-member observer State in the United Nations from this date onward, but that does not change the situation on the ground. The only way to give the Palestinian people the State that they need and deserve, and to give the Israeli people the security and peace they are entitled to, is through a negotiated two-State solution. We look to the United States, with the strong and active support of the United Kingdom and the international community, to do all it can in the coming weeks and months to take a decisive lead in restarting negotiations, and we look to the Israelis and Palestinians to be ready to enter into such talks.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Germany firmly believes in two States, Israel and Palestine, for two peoples in the Middle East. We share the goal of a Palestinian State. Germany has worked towards that end for years, mainly through its support for the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority. Yet it must be clear to everybody that a Palestinian State can be achieved only through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

We believe that there is reason to doubt whether the step taken today is helpful to the peace process at this point in time. We are concerned that it might lead to further hardening of positions instead of improving the chances of reaching a two-State solution through direct negotiations.

It is our expectation that the Palestinian leadership will not take unilateral steps on the basis of today's resolution 67/19 that could deepen the conflict and move us further away from a peaceful settlement. We call on both sides to engage in serious negotiations, without conditions or further delay. Parties must refrain from any action that undermines the prospects of negotiations and the objective of a two-State solution.

Germany explicitly welcomes the fact that the resolution adopted today calls for a two-State solution, and hence fully recognizes the right of Israel to exist in peace. I repeat that Israel's legitimate security concerns must be addressed in a credible manner or the peace process will remain stalled. Germany will do its utmost to support all efforts aimed at paving the way for a genuine negotiating process. That can be achieved only with a demonstration of the necessary political will on both sides and the active commitment of the international community, including the Quartet and regional actors.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland's decision to vote in favour of resolution 67/19, adopted today by the General Assembly, was motivated by our desire to resolve the current stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and to relaunch the peace process. We believe that Palestine's elevation to observer State status within the United Nations will revive the concept of a two-State solution in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. In that respect, we endorse the peace efforts of the international community, calling for a solution with two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The resolution recalls the importance of resolutions adopted in the past, notably, resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, concerning the creation of an Arab State and a Jewish State, and resolution 43/177, of 15 December 1988, which acknowledges the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on the Arab nature of one State and the Jewish nature of the other. The resolution just adopted refers to Jerusalem as the capital of the two States. In the light of these formulations, among others, we see the resolution as an appeal for the resumption of direct negotiations and as the keystone supporting a two-State solution, the prospects of which are fading.

The elevation of Palestine to the status of a United Nations observer State endows Palestine not only with rights but also with obligations, in particular that of refraining from the threat or use of force as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It also opens the door to several international conventions, particularly those on the protection of human rights and the fight against terrorism.

This decision does not involve a bilateral recognition of a Palestinian State, which will depend on future peace negotiations.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union in this debate, and wishes to make the following observations.

Today's vote is a significant step towards the creation of a State of Palestine, which we all look forward to. But Belgium believes that true progress will be made when the Palestinians will be able to benefit on the ground from the existence of a future State that has the necessary institutions, personnel and tools to function properly. Belgium fully shares the goal of resolution 67/19 just adopted — a two-State solution, with Israel living side by side in peace and security with a future State of Palestine that is democratic, viable and sustainable. The two-State solution is in fact the only possible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and every effort must be engaged to that end.

For Belgium, the resolution adopted today by the General Assembly does not yet constitute a recognition of a State in the full sense. The establishment of a fully legal State must result from negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. In our view, there is no alternative to negotiations, however difficult they might be. Priority must therefore be given to a rapid resumption of peace talks. In this context, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must abstain from any unilateral act that could undermine the credibility of the peace process.

With its European partners, Belgium calls on all the parties and all the stakeholders involved to start work immediately on resolving the conflict. We are determined to cooperate actively with the United States on an initiative that would establish parameters for the negotiation process and offer enough guarantees and incentives for both parties. The voting today was a clear sign that the peace process must be accelerated. A rapid and unconditional resumption of negotiations is necessary. What must be done at all costs is to bring the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators together at the table.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria): Bulgaria subscribes to the declaration on the Middle East peace process and the statement to be made shortly on behalf of the European Union. Allow me in my national capacity to present a brief explanation of our vote.

My delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19 after careful analysis. We do not expect the resolution to change the reality on the ground between Israel and Palestine, or to speed up a negotiated two-State solution. Our understanding is that the adoption of the resolution giving Palestine non-member observer status in the United Nations should in no way prejudice the process of direct negotiations. Therefore, we call for their immediate resumption without preconditions. These talks, based on the Quartet principles, existing agreements and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, continue to be the only sustainable way to achieve the establishment of a sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security alongside Israel.

Bulgaria consistently supports the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people pertaining to their right to self-determination. My country was among the first to recognize the State of Palestine back in 1988. Just as the Jewish people have a homeland in the State of Israel, the Palestinian people have the right to an independent State of Palestine.

On the bilateral level, Bulgaria has built and continues to develop close and friendly relations with both Palestine and Israel. Our main concern, however, is the possible adverse impact of the resolution on the prospect for an early resumption of negotiations. In view of the critical situation in the region and the international context in which the resolution was moved forward, we have serious doubts as to whether it will further advance the peace process.

We have continually stressed the fact that unilateral actions by either side are counterproductive and threaten the ultimate viability of the two-State solution. Bulgaria calls on the parties to refrain from any such actions, both bilaterally and in international settings, that could be detrimental to the peace process. We also appeal to them to work in good faith towards a negotiated settlement and to abide by their publicly undertaken commitments.

The critical situation in Gaza and southern Israel makes the immediate renewal of the peace efforts more pressing and urgent than ever. Bulgaria greatly appreciates the diplomatic efforts made by Egypt, the United States and the Secretary-General, which have led to the current ceasefire and encouraged hopes for a resumption of the peace process.

Mr. Starčević (Serbia): First of all, I want to warmly congratulate Palestine on achieving the status of non-member observer State in the United Nations. This is an important step in the long — and I would say far too long — journey towards the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to statehood. For the 132 Members of the United Nations that have so far recognized the State of Palestine, it is a sign that their support for the Palestinian cause is bringing results and strengthening the Palestinians' right to their self-determination and an independent State.

Like Yugoslavia before it, Serbia is among those 132 Member States. Our support for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and independence has never wavered. It is based on our own sense of justice and on the solid foundation of a number of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, reaching all the way back to the beginnings of the United Nations — all of them reaffirming the right of Palestinians to an independent and sovereign State of their own, based on the two-State solution.

Unlike Yugoslavia from 1967 to 1992, Serbia has had diplomatic relations with Israel and maintains good and friendly cooperation with that State. We are therefore fully conscious of Israel's legitimate security concerns and have an interest in promoting such a solution, which would bring about statehood for Palestine and security and peace for both Israel and Palestine. Neither a nation whose people was a victim of the Holocaust nor a nation still in quest for its statehood deserves to live in the same precarious state lasting for more than 60 years. The people of both States are weary of conflict; they should not be made to wait any longer for it to end. We must never accept the cynical view that the conflict can not be resolved and that the world must simply live with it.

The Middle East peace process negotiations should be urgently resumed and accelerated so that a peace agreement based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative can be reached. In the meantime, let us hope and let us act in such a way that the present ceasefire holds. The people of both States have a vested interest in that, even if their hawks try to create a different impression.

Ms. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we voted today in favour of resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations, the Government of Honduras could not help but recall the motives that led our peoples to establish this extraordinary Organization — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of nations large and small. The ultimate lodestar of the United Nations is that, to achieve peace, we must practice tolerance and live together as good neighbours.

Honduras firmly supports a solution between the two States, Israel and Palestine. The Honduran people deeply share the inalienable desire of the peoples of the Middle East for peace. Our decision to vote in favour of granting Palestine non-member observer status in the United Nations was based on our fervent wish to contribute to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that we believe should be based on the right to self-determination of both the Jewish and Palestinian people, the need for mutual recognition between the States of Israel and Palestine, the rights of Israel and Palestine to their own territory and to live in peace within stable and safe borders, and the need for a comprehensive, directly negotiated solution to all the remaining differences between both parties.

Honduras understands that today's voting neither attempts to make decisions nor claims that the international community should multilaterally make decisions that rightfully belong only to Israel and Palestine. On the basis of our own national experience, we know that peace cannot be imposed from outside, but can arise only from the people themselves. Recognition of Palestine and Israel by third parties cannot achieve peace between those two nations. To achieve a two-State solution and to benefit both peoples, there must be direct negotiations and understandings between them. Still, our recognition of both States aims to send an unambiguous signal of respect from Honduras to both peoples, whom we would fervently like to see coexist in peace. We know well that in the end what will seal a definitive peace between those nations is their mutual recognition of the right to self-determination and their right to exist as States, rather than any resolution of the international community.

In voting for the resolution, Honduras takes no position on the territorial and border claims of the parties, since we also know from the lessons of our own experience that such matters should not be a matter for political pronouncement by third parties. Such intervention not only exceeds our authority as third parties and our legitimate interest, but makes it more difficult to resolve disputes and hardens positions. It is a very different matter when an impartial third party — acting on their behalf within the framework of good offices or through a process of mediation, arbitration or judicial procedure — is charged by the parties with finding a peaceful solution to their differences.

The same applies to the separate but delicate issues that remain open to negotiation or understanding. The solution to those matters lies in direct negotiation between the parties. It is therefore vital for Israel and Palestine to return to the negotiating table and to focus on finding formulas to address the concerns between them, including security. The international community should support those efforts and remain ready to facilitate and support them in every constructive way possible.

Today's vote recognizing Palestine's non-member observer status in the United Nations should be construed not as representing a victory for one side or defeat for the other, but rather as the expression of the ardent desire of the United Nations for concord and progress to reign in the Middle East. Honduras calls for moderation and for the rights and privileges that Palestine was granted as a non-member observer State in the United Nations to be used to open new avenues of direct understanding and to draw closer to the ultimate goal of the resolution, which is peaceful coexistence and solidarity among peoples and nations.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): On this very day 65 years ago in this Assembly (see A/PV.128), Denmark voted in favour of the establishment of two States in the former mandate of Palestine. Today, by voting in favour of resolution 67/19, we reaffirmed our commitment to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security — a commitment we share with the rest of the European Union.

Denmark has consistently stood by Israel and its inherent right to self-defence in accordance with international law. We have also supported the Palestinian right to statehood and the building of the Palestinian Authority. That achievement deserves our full acknowledgment, and we will continue to building the institutions of a sovereign State of Palestine. In that regard, Denmark calls on all Palestinians to support President Abbas in his efforts to promote inter-Palestinian reconciliation as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian State.

While we welcome last week's ceasefire agreement, the sudden escalation of conflict in Gaza highlighted the urgent need to move forward a comprehensive solution to the conflict. We strongly appeal to both sides to build on today's decision and to resume direct, bilateral negotiations immediately and without conditions on all final status issues, respecting previous agreements and understandings. Only a political solution to the conflict can bring about lasting security. At the same time, we also appeal to the parties to refrain from taking any steps that could negatively affect the situation and efforts towards a negotiated solution. The time to heed the call made in resolution 181 (II), adopted 65 years ago, for creating two States, is long overdue.

The resolution adopted, henceforth according Palestine the status of a non-member observer State in the General Assembly, is a natural continuation of our firm support for a two-State solution and for Palestinian State-building. Our vote, however, does not imply formal bilateral recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State. That is a separate question that we will continue to consider within a framework established by international law.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): In accordance with the long-standing position of the European Union, Italy is strongly committed to a comprehensive negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as being in the fundamental interests of the European Union as well as of the parties in the region. Our strong support for Palestinian State-building efforts and our excellent bilateral relations with both parties are grounded in the firm conviction that a comprehensive peace must and can be achieved on the basis of a two-State solution with the State of Israel and a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, both living within agreed borders and enjoying peace and security. Italy stands by its conviction that such an agreement can be reached only through bilateral negotiations, and strongly supports the European Union's call on all parties to pursue actions conducive to an environment with the confidence necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations, and to refrain from actions that undermine the credibility of the process.

Italy decided to vote in favour of resolution 67/19. We took that decision in the light of the information we received from President Abbas on the constructive approach he intends to take after this vote. I refer in particular to his readiness to resume direct negotiations without preconditions and to refrain from seeking membership in other specialized agencies in the current circumstances, or pursuing the possibility of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. With regard to the latter, Italy would not accept instrumental actions intended to question Israel's inalienable right to defend itself or to have recourse to measures necessary to protect the lives of its citizens. We also wish to underline our firm conviction that the new status of the Palestinian Authority should not, under any circumstances, be applied retroactively. Italy stresses that today's vote in no way prejudges its commitment to a comprehensive negotiated peace settlement, which remains the only possible path to Palestinian Statehood and full United Nations membership.

I would like to conclude by restating Italy's unwavering support for a negotiated two-State solution, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Mitsialis (Greece): Greece's vote in favour of resolution 67/19, on upgrading Palestine's status to that of a non-member observer State, was guided by our long-standing position of principle that the resolution of the Middle East question should be based on two States, an independent and viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel. It is our firm belief that that is the only solution assuring the long-term interests of the two peoples, as well as peace and stability in the region, and it is therefore the duty of the international community to safeguard it.

Paragraph 5 of the resolution contains an important provision. Greece believes that the inalienable and non-negotiable right of the Palestinian people to statehood can be fulfilled through a results-oriented peace process and direct negotiations between the two parties on all final status issues. A comprehensive settlement, by definition, includes the safeguarding of the inherent right of the State of Israel to peace and security. By voting in favour of this resolution, Greece believes that it contributes towards a resumption of the peace process without preconditions, and to the promotion of a two-State solution. In that regard, we urge the Palestinian side to refrain from unilateral steps, and the Israeli side to refrain from actions on the ground that could jeopardize the viability of such a solution.

Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary): Hungary abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19 based on the following considerations.

Hungary's position on the Middle East peace process, the status of Palestine and the decision made today are based on the fundamental interest of Hungary and the European Union in peace and stability in the region. When we evaluate any initiatives, including today's resolution, we pay attention to all the important factors, including their possible implications for the prospects for a resumption of the Middle East peace process. In that context, we are very concerned about the possible negative consequences that could result from the adoption of today's resolution. Our position on the statehood of Palestine remains valid and leaves no room for a negative consideration of the resolution. It is our firm belief that a settlement of the Middle East conflict must be based on the two-State solution. With that aim, we support the establishment of a sovereign, viable and contiguous State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel, to be implemented through direct negotiations. In line with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union by High Representative Catherine Ashton, we support all efforts to bring about substantive, direct negotiations between the parties in the coming months.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria): Austria would like to express its full support for the positions expressed in the statement of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, earlier today, and for the statement by the observer of the European Union to be delivered later.

Austria's vote in favour of resolution 67/19 is a vote in support of a two-State solution. It is a vote of confidence in the serious efforts of the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Abbas, to build efficient State institutions. It is a call to that leadership to fulfil its commitment to returning to the negotiating table with Israel without further conditions, and a call to both parties to re-enter into negotiations in good faith. Equally, it is a call to the Palestinian people and their political factions to unite behind their leadership's efforts to seek a durable negotiated solution, as stipulated in the resolution.

Mrs. Hrdá (Czech Republic): I would like to reiterate the Czech Republic's support for negotiations leading to Palestine's statehood and all constructive steps to that end. In that regard we continue to encourage both sides to return to direct talks leading to a negotiated two-State solution without delays or preconditions. On several occasions the Czech Republic has called on all the parties concerned to avoid any step that might interfere with or prejudice the outcome of that process. That is why the Czech Republic voted against resolution 67/19.

The Czech Republic fully supports Palestine's aspirations to statehood through a comprehensive negotiated agreement between the two parties that results in two States, namely, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): Finland voted in favour of resolution 67/19 with the aim of strengthening prospects for a Palestinian State and showing support for the moderate forces that are committed to pursuing that objective through negotiations. We are committed to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

We have witnessed how the Palestinian Authority now has institutions that pass the threshold of what one can expect from a modern State. That achievement deserves our full recognition. Finland will continue to contribute to building the future institutions of a sovereign State of Palestine. We appeal to all sides to build on this decision, to engage in negotiations immediately and without conditions, and to refrain from taking any steps that could negatively affect the situation and the efforts towards a negotiated solution.

Our vote today in favour of the resolution, which accords Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, is a natural continuation of our firm support for a two-State solution and Palestinian state-building. However, Finland's vote does not imply formal recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State. That is a separate question and we will determine our national position on the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in the Constitution of Finland.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): Australia's decision to abstain in the voting on resolution 67/19 balances our long-standing support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their own State with our concern that the only durable basis for the resolution of this conflict is direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The resolution does not confer statehood; it grants non-member observer State status to the Palestinian Authority in the United Nations. We have long supported a negotiated two-State solution that allows a secure Israel to live alongside an independent future Palestinian State. Australia has concerns that this resolution may actually make it harder rather than easier for the two parties to return to direct negotiations. But our support for a future Palestinian State achieved through negotiations remains steadfast, as does our support for Israel's legitimacy and right to security.

In looking beyond today's vote, we urge all sides to return immediately to negotiations in good faith. It is critical that no party seek to exploit or overreact to the outcome of today's vote, including within the United Nations system, in ways that could undermine prospects for a just and lasting settlement.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand's vote in favour of resolution 67/19 is consistent with our long-held policy on the Palestinian issue and our support for a two-State solution. The resolution supports existing internationally agreed-on parameters for resolving the Israel-Palestine issue. Our vote supports Israel's absolute right to exist, with a vibrant society living in freedom and prosperity, free from fear of attack, not least from Hamas rockets, with that Israeli State living side by side with an independent, contiguous, viable Palestinian State with recognized borders. All that, we know, can be achieved only through a negotiated two-State solution.

The events of the past month have demonstrated President Abbas's capacity as a partner for peace. We underscore our support for him and for Prime Minister Fayyad and others who are working to make a two-State solution viable. We hope that with this decision both sides can now do whatever is required to return to the negotiating table, and that nothing is said or done to impede that return. We also hope that reactions to this vote do not jeopardize progress in Palestinian state-building efforts. The President of the General Assembly was indeed right to speak of all of us being judged by how we bear ourselves after this vote.

Whatever the significance of today's vote, we must now turn to what happens tomorrow. This resolution is a political symbol of the commitment of the United Nations to a two-State solution. New Zealand has cast its vote accordingly based on the assumption that our vote is without prejudice to New Zealand's position on its recognition of Palestine. But resolutions and debates here in New York will not bring about a secure Israel living peacefully alongside a viable, contiguous

Palestinian State. Indeed, it is regrettable that today's decision had to be achieved by a vote at the United Nations and not by direct negotiations. But that is the reality of the situation on the ground, to which many others have referred.

Today, we must therefore mark the beginning of a new dynamic, with the parties immediately and without any preconditions returning to negotiations, before the opportunity of a two-State solution is lost to us all.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): Norway is a strong supporter of Palestinian rights and aspirations to statehood in accordance with international law. We are committed to continuing to empower Palestinian institutions. The Palestinian Authority has already passed the threshold of a functioning State in key sectors. That was endorsed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, chaired by Norway, both in 2011 and 2012. We support Palestine's upgraded status in the General Assembly to that of a non-member observer State. That is consistent with our long-standing position on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State solution. We supported the Partition Plan in the General Assembly in 1947, Israel's admission as a full State Member of the United Nations in 1949, including the declarations made in that context, and we recognized it as a State in the same year.

Resolution 67/19 is based on the two-State solution and the principles therein, and does not prejudge the outcomes of final status negotiations between the parties. Neither does it violate the Oslo Accords. The Palestinians have a legitimate right to take this step, based on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Furthermore, it is time for the General Assembly to recognize the serious efforts the Palestinian Authority has made to build effective State institutions.

Upgrading Palestine's status in the United Nations is not a provocative step. It sends a message that the Palestine Liberation Organization and President Abbas are genuinely committed to a peaceful solution based on diplomatic means. But with rights come responsibilities. It is time for the Palestinians to unite in building a society based on democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The fact that this resolution has broad backing on the Palestinian side is a positive step. Norway is strongly committed to the two-State solution with a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and within secure and recognized borders. Only a negotiated solution between the parties can bring about lasting peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. We appeal to both sides to build on today's decision in a constructive manner and urgently resume comprehensive final status negotiations.

Our support of an upgraded status for Palestine in the United Nations does not prejudge the question of recognition. The national procedures to formally recognize the State of Palestine are still pending.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.